

SERMONS

O N

Several Occasions.

In Two Volumes.

Vol. II.

By the Reverend

BENJAMIN NEWTON, M. A.

Late Vicar of *Lantwit*, in the Dioceſe of *Landaff*,

AND

Minifter of *St. Nicholas* in *Glouceſter*.



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Printed, and ſold by A. BETTESWORTH and
C. HITCH in *Pater-noster-Row*.

MDCCXXXVI.

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BENJAMIN TOMES, M.A.

Late Vicar of Apsley, in the Diocese of London.

AND

Minister of St. Andrew in Glasgow.



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C. HITCH in Pall-mall.

MDCCLXXVI.



THE
CONTENTS.

SERMON I.

2 COR. v. 11. Former Part.

*Knowing therefore the Terroure of the Lord, we
persuade Men.*—— Page 1

SERMON II.

Preached at the Assizes held at Gloucester,
August 1, 1731.

PROV. xiv. 25.

*There is a Way which seemeth right unto a Man :
But the End thereof are the Ways of Death.* 23

The CONTENTS.

SERMON III.

MATTH. xi. 28.

Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you Rest. 45

SERMON IV.

MARK vii. Part of the 37th Verse.

— He maketh both the Deaf to hear, and the Dumb to speak.

The whole Verse runs thus :

And were beyond Measure astonished, saying, He hath done all Things well : He maketh both the Deaf to hear, and the Dumb to speak. 69

SERMON V.

I COR. x. 12.

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall. 89

SERMON VI.

Preached on GOOD-FRIDAY.

JOHN xi. 47, 48, 49, 50.

Then gathered the Chief Priests and the Pharisees a Council, and said, What do we ? for this Man doeth

THE CONTENTS.

doeth many Miracles. If we let him thus alone, all Men will believe on him; and the Romans shall come and take away both our Place and Nation.

And one of them named Caiphas, being the High Priest that same Year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider, that it is expedient for us, that one Man should die for the People, and that the whole Nation perish not. III

S E R M O N VII.

Preached on EASTER-DAY.

I COR. XV. 42, 43.

So also is the Resurrection of the Dead: It is sown in Corruption, it is raised in Incorruption: It is sown in Dishonour, it is raised in Glory: It is sown in Weakness, it is raised in Power. 139

S E R M O N VIII.

Preached on EASTER-DAY.

JOHN xi. 18, 19.

Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, what Sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?

Jesus answered, and said unto them, destroy this Temple, and in three Days I will raise it up.

159

SER-

The CONTENTS.

SERMON IX.

Preached on ASCENSION-DAY.

Acts i. 9.

And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up, and a Cloud received him out of their Sight.

185

SERMON X.

Preached on TRINITY-SUNDAY.

I COR. xi. 14.

But the Natural Man receiveth not the Things of the Spirit of God; for they are Foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are Spiritually discerned.

209

SERMON XI.

Preached at an ORDINATION.

I THESS. iv. 8.

He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not Man, but God who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit.

233

SER-

THE CONTENTS.

SERMON XII.

PSALM xxxviii. 3.

*There is no Soundness in my Flesh, because of thine
Anger: Neither is there any Rest in my Bones,
because of my Sin.* 261

SERMON XIII.

LUKE xvi. 31.

*And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and
the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded,
though one rose from the Dead.* 287

SERMON XIV.

PSALM xciv. 12. Part of 13.

*Blessed is the Man whom thou chastenest, O Lord,
and teachest him out of thy Law.
That thou mayest give him Rest from the Days of
Adversity. ———* 317

SERMON XV.

Preached at the Election of a MAYOR for the
City of Gloucester.

2 SAM. xxiii. Part of the 3d Verse.

*He that ruleth over Men must be just, ruling in the
Fear of God.* 341

SER-

The CONTENTS.

SERMON XVI.

Preached on a FAST-DAY.

NUMB. xi. Part of the 33d Verse.

*The Wrath of the Lord was kindled against
the People, and the Lord smote the People with
a very great Plague.*

367



1691

Preached at the Election of a Mayor for the
City of Gloucester.

SER-

(I)



SERMON I.

2 Cor. v. 11. Former Part.

*Knowing therefore the Terroure of the
Lord, we perswade Men.*-----

IN the Account which I
shall give, and the Use
which I shall make of
these Words, I shall look
no further back than to the imme-
diately foregoing Verse, in which
St. Paul tells the *Corinthians*; That
Vol. II. B we

2 SERMON I.

we must all appear before the Judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the Things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. And, by that *Terrour of the Lord*, which the Apostle saith he knew, and therefore persuaded Men, I shall understand the Apprehension of that dreadful Judgment of Christ, which he had just made mention of. I shall consider the Judgment here spoken of,

I. *First, As Certain.* And,

II. *Secondly, As Terrible.* After which I shall in the

III. *Third, and last Place*, with the Apostle make use of the Consideration of it *to persuade Men.*

I. *First*, The Judgment here spoken of by the Apostle, is *certain*. It is not what he was in any Doubt about,

SERMON I. 3

about, or what he only conjectured, and guess'd at ; but it is what he *knew*, as he expresses himself in my Text. If we consider, to whose Information St. *Paul* owed his Knowledge of this, and all other Truths of the Gospel of Christ Jesus, we may be satisfied that it was with the fullest, and most perfect Certainty, that they were manifested to him. He acquaints us to this Purpose, *Gal. i. 12. That he received not the Gospel which he preached, of Man, nor was he taught it, but by the Revelation of Jesus Christ.* It was God, who made known the Gospel to his Apostles, and sent them to preach it to the rest of Mankind : And we find, *Acts x. 44.* that one principal Part of their Commission, and Charge which they received from God was, that they should *preach unto the People, and testify, that it is Jesus Christ, who was or-*
B 2
dained

4 SERMON I.

dained of God, to be the Judge of the Quick, and the Dead. The Degree of Certainty therefore, with which *St. Paul knew this Terrour of the Lord*, this future universal Judgment, was the highest in which he could be assured of any Truth whatever: Since it is impossible, that any Evidence, or Testimony that is not divine, can be equal to that which is: And, if from the fallible Deductions of our own imperfect Reasonings, from the Testimony of our own Senses, which are obnoxious to Imposition and Error; and from the Information of other Men, equally subject to Mistake with ourselves, we can pretend to possess ourselves of Certainty and Demonstration; how irresistible must the Conviction of that Truth be, which is attested by the *God of Truth himself?* If we can upon any Account be persuaded to receive
any

SERMON I. 5

any thing as true, upon the Witness of *Men*, how much more ought we to submit our Belief to the Witness of *God*, which is infinitely greater? That *St. Paul* knew, and was assured of the Reality, and Certainty of a Day which God had appointed for an universal Judgment, was owing to God's own immediate Revelation of it to him, which left no room for any the least Scruple, or Question concerning it. Nor do we want such sufficient Assurance of this most important Truth, of a future Judgment of the World in Righteousness, as may enable us, effectually to persuade Men to receive it, and to live under the Apprehensions, and Influence of it. We have it not indeed, in the same Manner that *St. Paul* had, by immediate Revelation; but we have it with as full Assurance as is at all necessary for us, and as is consistent

6 SERMON I

sistent with that Faith, which God requires us to walk by. In communicating to us the Notices of himself, and of his Dealings with us, God is pleased not to *Force*, but (as in my Text) to *Persuade* us to *believe* him, and in him. And the Arguments and Testimony with which this Truth is proposed, and supported, are so strong and convincing, that we must put a Force upon ourselves, we must go contrary to our own Methods of Reasoning, and break all our own Rules of discerning, and admitting Truth, before we can bring ourselves to disbelieve, or to reject the Doctrine of a Day of universal Judgment. That Knowledge, which the Apostles had immediately, we have mediately from Divine Revelation. God revealed it to them, and they have transmitted it to us, in those holy Scriptures, which are all given by
Inspi-

SERMON I. 7

Inspiration of God, and which are written for our Learning.

It is not my Design to enter into any Proof of the Divine Authority of the Holy Scripture, and (by consequence) of the Truth and Certainty of all the Doctrines contained in it. The doing of this would require a whole Discourse; nor do I speak to those who doubt of, or deny; but to those who thankfully acknowledge the Inspiration of those Holy Books, and build a firm Faith, and Hope upon them. These, when they read, in this Word of the God of Truth, *that He hath appointed a Day, in the which He will judge the World in Righteousness; that He hath ordained Jesus Christ, to be the Judge both of the Quick, and the Dead; that all the Dead, small and great, shall stand before the Throne of God, and be judged every one according to their Works,* will be satisfied

8 SERMON I.

tified of the sure and unchangeable Appointment of that dreadful Day, and require no further Proof of the Certainty of it; but rather (thus sufficiently *knowing this Terror of the Lord*) will be persuaded to employ themselves in preparing for it.

Not that they want other Reasons, to render this great Truth credible, and worthy to be received by them; and such as ought to be of weight, even with those, who question, or deny the sacred Authority of Scripture, unless they disbelieve the very Being of any God in Heaven, or any Providence which observes, and governs, what is done upon Earth. A future Judgment of the World is so visibly necessary for the Vindication of the Justice, the Equity, and the Wisdom of God, that (with all who ascribe these Perfections to God) it can never

SERMON I. 9

ver be a Thing incredible ; but they must conclude it to be altogether absurd, and even contradictory, to allow that God is just, and equitable, and wise, and at the same time to deny such a future Tribunal, as may rectify all the seeming unequal Distributions of this present World, and convince all Men, that it is far from God, *that the Righteous should always be as the Wicked ; but that the Judge of all the Earth will do right ; will reward every Man according to his Works ; when they that have done evil, shall go away into everlasting Punishment, but the Righteous into Life eternal.* Thus both the infallible Word of God, and the Reason of Mankind, do concur in establishing the Truth of the Doctrine I have been delivering ; and we are taught from both, with *Certainty to know this Terrour of the Lord.*

to SERMONS

II. Secondly, As the future Judgment referred to in the Text is thus *Certain*, so also is it *Terrible*. When we meditate upon the Accounts which God in his Word hath given us of the dreadful Solemnity of that Judgment, the Majesty of the Judge, and the Consequences of his Sentence; When we consider all this, as what so nearly concerns ourselves; and as that, by which we are to be determined unalterably, to an Eternity of Happiness, or Misery; we shall find that no Consideration of any kind can be of equal Dread with this, and that it is very properly and elegantly in my Text called the *Terror of the Lord*, as exceeding all other Fears by whatsoever else they may be caused. In *Rev. vi. 12, &c.* some Account is given of the opening of that Day, and of the Horrour, and Astonishment which it shall bring along

SERMON II

with it, when the Stars shall fall unto the Earth, and the Heavens shall depart as a Scroll, when it is rolled together; and every Mountain and Island shall be moved out of their Places; and the Kings of the Earth, and the great Men, and the rich Men, and the chief Captains, and the mighty Men, and every Bond-man, and every Free-man, shall hide themselves in the Dens, and in the Rocks of the Mountains: And shall say to the Mountains and Rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the Face of him that sitteth upon the Throne, and from the Wrath of the Lamb: For the great Day of his Wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand? Nor can this Terrour be greater, than it is just, and well-grounded; for what can be equally dreadful with the Appearance of God, when he cometh to judge the World? Or what is there, that can be Matter of

12 SERMON I.

so much Apprehension to Man, as his being to be tried (and that at the Peril of his Soul to all Eternity) before a Judge so qualified; who is *of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity*, without condemning, and punishing it; and whose Knowledge is such, as that *nothing can be hid from it, but all things are open and naked in his Sight*, however successfully they may have been disguised, or concealed from the Eyes of Men? When such a God enters into Judgment, and shall mark what hath been done amiss, who can stand justified in His Sight? or abide the Rigour of his Inquisition? And, *if the Righteous scarcely be saved, where, or how shall the Ungodly, and the Sinner appear before him?* How must he be overwhelmed with Confusion, when he appears with nothing but Wickedness to give an Account of, when he has nothing but
 of ever.

SERMON I. 13

everlasting Punishment to expect? His own Conscience all the while reproaching him, and representing to him the Justice of that terrible Sentence, which his offended, and at length irreconcilable Judge is denouncing against him? When he must depart for ever, into *that utter Darknes, where is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of Teeth; where the Worm dieth not, and the Fire is not, nor ever shall be quenched?* So dreadful is this Day of the Lord! and so certain is the Knowledge of it! And surely the Inferences, and Arguments, which arise from this Knowledge, must be very weighty, and effectual; very powerful and persuaſive. Which brings me in the

III. *Third* and last Place, to consider the Use, which the Apostle makes of the Revelation, which
God

14 SERMON II

God had been pleased to make of this great Truth to him.

Knowing (saith he) *the Terroure of the Lord, we persuade Men.* And we may collect from other Scriptures, and from the Inferences which naturally, and without any straining, arise from this Knowledge, to what Purposes the Persuasions, which St. Paul intends, were directed. As,

First, Because God had appointed a Day in which he would judge the World in Righteousness, the Apostle (as we find *Acts xvii. 30.*) presses upon Men the Necessity of Repentance. Let every Man impartially examine his own Life, and his Conscience will represent to him innumerable Instances of such Things done by him, for which he will not be able to abide a Trial before God, and which therefore it will be his great Concern, in Time to blot out
by

SERMON I 15

by Repentance, (as St. Peter argues, *Acts* iii. 19.) before the Day of his Lord's Coming. It was by this means, that Men were always taught to make themselves ready against the Approaching, and Appearance of Jesus Christ; and in what Sense soever the Kingdom of God is understood, whether of Grace, or of Majesty, and Glory, it is the declared Duty of Mankind, to fit themselves for the Coming of it, by Repentance and Conversion. St. John the Baptist was sent to prepare the Way before the Face of our Lord, at his First Coming, by *preaching the Baptism of Repentance*; because Men could not be Objects of God's Grace, and admitted into the Privileges of his Evangelical Kingdom, while they continued in the Commission of such Sins, as could not fail to provoke the Anger of God against them, such as were altogether

16 SERMON I.

ther inconsistent with the Duties of his Subjects, and the Laws of his Kingdom.

But surely the Argument is much more enforced, and the Conclusiveness of it is much more visible, and convincing, when it is applied to the persuading Men to prepare themselves against the second glorious, and dreadful Appearance of Jesus Christ, when he shall come in Justice and Vengeance, in the Clouds of Heaven, and attended with the many Thousands of his Holy Angels, to visit the Inhabitants of the Earth for their Iniquity. Whatever Room there might be, in the first of these Appearings, for Men to repent, and amend themselves afterwards, who had not done it before; there will be no Place for this at his Second Coming. *He that is then unjust, must be unjust still; and he that is then filthy, must be filthy*

SERMON I. 17

filthy still; must be unfit, and unable to stand before his just, and holy Judge; must take his Portion among those that are like himself, who are not written in the Book of Life, but are condemned to be cast into the Lake of Fire. Since then we thus know this *Terrour* of the Lord, and the Wrath that is revealed from Heaven against all evil Doers; let us be persuaded, seriously, and in Time to consider, *What manner of Persons we ought to be, in all holy Conversation, and Godliness; looking for, and hasting to the coming of the Day of God, wherein the Heavens (being on fire) shall be dissolved, and the Elements shall melt with fervent Heat: And seeing that we look for such things, let us be diligent that we may be found of him in Peace, without Spot, and blameless.* 2 Pet. iii. 11, 12, 14.

18 SERMON II.

Secondly, That we may be the more effectually dispos'd to this good Purpose; let us, to the Considerations of the *Certainty*, and the *Terrour* of this Judgment, add that of the utter Uncertainty of the Time, when it shall be, and of the astonishing Horrour, with which it will strike all those, upon whom it shall come unawares. *The Day of the Lord cometh as a Thief in the Night*, that is, when Men are most secure, when they are under no Apprehensions of its Approach; and therefore, because we know not when the Time is, let us constantly watch, and pray, that our Lord at his Coming may find us doing his Will, and ready to enter into his Joy.

Lastly, As our Knowledge of this *Terrour* of the *Lord* should persuade us to repent of our Sins, to amend our past Lives, to be constantly upon our Guard, and by

Prayer

SERMON I. 19

Prayer to call upon God, to direct, and to aid us: So, if we will suffer it to obtain these happy Ends upon us, it will at length so wholly cease to be a *Terror*, that it will prove the greatest Comfort, and Support to us, against all other Fears and Troubles whatsoever, which we can possibly meet with in this Life. The Fear of God, and of his Judgment, is the surest Remedy against all other Fear; and the Man that is in no other Danger, than what he brings upon himself by fearing to offend God, will, by the Consideration of this last Day of Retribution, be quickly freed from the Fear of what the Devil, or Man can do unto him, how much soever it may seem to be in their Power to hurt him. He that feareth only *him, who hath Power to kill the Soul*, will not be afraid of any others, tho' it may be in *their Power to kill the*

20 SERMON I.

Body; for, while he continues in the Fear of God, this will be so far from being an Hurt, that it will be a Benefit to him; especially, if he *suffer for Righteousness*, it will entitle him to a more exceeding Weight of Glory, and put him the sooner into the Possession of it. He that places his Hopes of Honour, and Praise upon the Commendation, which *God the righteous Judge* shall give to his Actions at the last Day, will be little afraid of any unjust Calumny, or Slander, which the Malice, and Falshood of Man may endeavour to blast his good Name, and Reputation by, in this present evil World. He that considers, that God is merciful, as well as just; and that the same Jesus Christ, before whom *he is to stand at the latter Day*, is his Redeemer, the Person who so loved him, as to lay down his own Life for him, will not be cast into Despair

SERMON I. 21

spair at the Apprehension of his own Sins ; but will be encouraged to repent of them, and, in consequence of that, firmly to hope for the Pardon of them ; will be therefore sure that they will not be objected against him, or imputed to him, at that great Trial, because his Judge hath blotted them out of *the Book of his Remembrance*, with his own Blood. Thus may the Knowledge of God's coming one Day to judge the World, be turned, from our greatest Terrour, into our surest Support, and Comfort ; and, we may be persuaded by it, so to employ the Remainder of our Days, in the Consideration of it, as that we may think of it with Hope and Courage ; as that our Fear of God's Justice may be tempered and abated by our Faith in his Mercy : As that we may constantly be ready

22 SERMON I

dy for the Coming of our Lord, and
be found by him fit to enter into his
Glory.



5 JY61

SER



SERMON II.

*Preached at the Assizes held at
Gloucester, Aug. 1, 1731.*



Prov. xiv. 25.

*There is a Way which seemeth right
unto a Man: But the End thereof
are the Ways of Death.*

HUMAN Life, on account
of its continually tending
towards its End, is usually
and very appositely compared to a
Jour-

24 SERMON II.

Journey ; and the particular Manner and Course of Life, which each Man chuses for himself, is with equal Propriety called his *Way*, the Path by which he conducts himself, and by the Direction of which, he proposes to find the true End of his Travall.

In order to any one's succeeding thus well, it will be necessary that the Way he chuses be the right one ; for if he proceeds in a Path which is not such, whatever Dispatch he may make, and how much soever he may strive to reach the Mark he aims at, all his Activity and Industry will be in vain : He will proceed without any sufficient Warrant for his Safety in the Way, or any well-grounded Assurance of Profit or Repose at the End of it ; he will find too late, that after having been perplexed and bewildered in his Passage, he is at length disappointed
of

SERMON II. 25

of his Purpose, and irrecoverably lost. That it is possible for a Man to be thus far and fatally mistaken, is the Meaning of my Text, which taken out of its Figurative Expression, teaches us, that we may think ourselves very safe, and absolutely in the right, and yet may be in Error of the most Destructive Consequence: The *Way* we are in may to us *seem good*, and yet in Reality, and in the End, it may be, *the Way of Death*.

It shall be my Endeavour in what I am about to say,

I. *First*, To make it appear, that the Text contains a certain Truth, that what it declares is verified by Experiment, in the well known, and too general Practice of Mankind. And,

26 SERMON II.

II. *Secondly*, I shall enquire after the Causes that may be assigned for Man's being liable to be thus destructively misled.

I. *First*, I am to make it appear, that what my Text asserts is assuredly true, as being verified by Experience in the Practice of Mankind.

If we examine into the Conduct of Men, so far as it hath Regard to their single and personal Welfare, it will be found to be a very common Case, that their bad Estate and Condition in the latter Part of Life is owing to their having at the first mistaken what only appeared to be right, for that which was so in Reality; that their ill Success and Disappointment in the End is to be imputed to their not having been in good Time stopped in or diverted from that Way, which they had ta-

S E R M O N II. 27

ken for the Way of Life, of passing through the World in the most agreeable and happy Manner.

For Instance: After a long Possession of exalted Rank and unequalled Power, at length to fall into Contempt and Ruin, is what hath been the Lot of many Men, whose Names and Advancements, and Misfortunes make very distinguish'd and instructive Parts of the Histories of Nations. These have been such as have imagined, that the truest Way to Safety and Enjoyment hath been to raise themselves above the Reach of Danger; and that the highest Pitch of Honour was the farthest removed from Disgrace. How contrary to the beginning of this Way the Issues of it have been, they who have made the Proof have often found by dearly-bought Experience: The very Successes they have had, have been the

28 SERMON II.

Grounds of their Calamity and Complaint; and their Fall could not have been so great and destructive, had they failed of attaining to the Height to which they had aspired.

There are some, who seek Felicity in a lower; but, as they persuade themselves, in a securer and more certain Way; that *put their Trust in their Goods, and in the Multitude of their Riches*: But how very often do such Men fail of finding in their Affluence that Content and Ease, which they fancied to be so much in their Power! The Drudgery and Toil of getting Riches is usually succeeded with the equally anxious Care of preserving and securing them: The Possessor of Abundance often wants the Heart to allow himself any Enjoyment in the Use of it: What he has already gotten only increases his Eagerness after more

and

SERMON II 29

and greater Gains; and the Treasure he has amass'd together often proves a Temptation to Power, or Violence, or Craft to take it away from him, and to leave him lamenting for the Remainder of his Life such great Losses, as had he not been very rich indeed, it had been impossible for him to have suffered, or to have been liable to.

Besides the two which I have been speaking of, there is a Third and very different Path, in which, according to common Observation, many chuse to make their Passage through the World, as that in which alone a Man may be said to live to any Purpose of Pleasure and Delight. Of the Ways I have mentioned, the first appears too hazardous, and the second too laborious to Men of effeminate and indolent Dispositions. Sensual Enjoyments without Restraint, and Ease with-
out

30 SERMON II

out Interruption or Disturbance, make up what, in the Account of these Men, is to be called true Life, and all that is worth living for. But into how many Ways of Death doth this Path, which at first seemed so right to them, lead them in the End! The extravagant Profusion with which these Pleasures are purchased, and that Absence of Reason to direct them, which Intemperance brings them into, often put Men upon, or at least render them liable to be led into irregular and criminal Actions, and occasion so many to appear with Fear and Shame before the awful Tribunals of vindictive Justice, where their worst Deeds are frequently accounted for, and endeavoured to be extenuated by their Necessities, and by their Want of knowing what they did, to which their wrong Pursuits of Pleasure had so unhappily brought them. But

SERMON II. 31

But supposing Men to have escaped such fatal Miscarriages, there will still remain Proof enough, that they have erred in their Choice, who have taken a voluptuous Course of Living for an happy one. For with how much Gaiety soever Men enter upon the beginning of this Way, the last Stage of it is generally found to be very tiresome and mortifying; when the Body is by Debauchery filled with consuming Pains, and noisome Distempers; and the restless irritated Appetite continues still craving, but attended with Impotence, and absolute Despair of Enjoyment.

Hitherto we have enquired, how far the Truth of the Text is verified by the Practice of Man considered singly, and in his personal Capacity. And the Discovery will not prove more agreeable, if we examine further how the Case stands with Man,
if

32 SERMON II.

if we consider him as combined and united with others, whether in Civil or Religious Society.

The Body Politick is in many respects to be considered as one Person, and as such is capable of being in a good or ill Estate; able to do Acts, by the Consequences of which it will be found to have proceeded wisely, or to have been in Error; and may truly be said to have a sound and good, or an infirm and disordered Constitution: Nor, where the latter of these is apprehended to be the Case, are there ever wanting more than sufficient Numbers of such, as are very officious in undertaking to amend, and to replace it in its utmost Strength and Beauty, provided they may be enabled to do it, by having the Power put into their Hands, which is necessary for so desirable a Purpose.

That

SERMON II. 33

That even the Publick may err, may be misled by Appearances of Good into real Evils, and in its Measures may find itself upon Trial to have been in Mistakes, is not to be denied; because the Truth of this is so often, and authentickly acknowledged by itself, if not by the making of every new Law, yet by the altering or repealing of those, which it hath formerly made. And how much Men fall into Error, and that of the most destructive Nature, with regard to Religion, and to the Discharge of the Service which they owe to God, appears from too manifold and evident Proofs, both in the Heathen and the Christian World. In the former Polytheism, Idolatry, Human Sacrifices, and those even of their own Sons and Daughters, are charged by the true God, not upon particular Men only, but upon whole Nations, and upon his own

34 SERMON II.

People among the rest. And among such as are called by the Christian Name, how great are the Numbers of those, who have corrupted the Purity and Simplicity of the Gospel-Worship, multiplying without Measure the Objects of their Adoration, changing and maiming the Institutions of Christ, and overcharging the Service they offer to the True God with innumerable, and those superstitious Rites and Observances.

That in the Performances of these Kinds Men accounted themselves to be in the right Way, cannot without great Absurdity be denied. For we cannot imagine that they would lay themselves under such heavy Burdens, and break through the dearest and tenderest Sentiments of Humanity, and the closest Ties of Blood, without thinking themselves indispensably obliged so to do. But however right such Ways might
 - 309 F II. seem

SERMON II. 35

seem, we have express and often repeated Declarations of God himself to assure us, that they were the Ways of Death. The Provocations of these Kinds which were given to God, were such as he would not bear; nor do we find any favourable Allowance made by him on account of the Goodness of the Intentions of those, whose Practices were so abominable in his Sight.

I have now in the *First* Place endeavoured to shew the Truth of what is asserted in the Text, namely, That Men, whether singly or in Numbers, whether in Religious or Civil Societies, are liable to be imposed upon by Appearances; and that so much, as to think themselves very safe, and altogether in the right Way, and yet in Reality, and in the End, the Way they so approve of, may be found to tend to Death, to the Misleading and

36 SERMON II.

Destruction of such as walk in it.
I now proceed in the

II. *Second Place*, to enquire into the Causes of Men's being liable to such fatal Mistakes.

The Defectiveness and Insufficiency of human Knowledge is the principal and fundamental Cause of the mistaken Choice which Men make of their Way, and of the Errors into which they are so liable to be led. The View they have is short; nor will their Sight serve to discern what is at any long Distance before them; so that the Tendency and End of the Path they are in is not discovered by them, 'till they are so engaged in it, as not to be able to retreat without more Difficulty, than they are willing, or, perhaps, know how to encounter. The seeming Good appears to invite them at the beginning; but the destructive End is beyond

SERMON II 37

beyond the Reach of their Eyes, and covered from them in the Dimness of Futurity. We are not therefore to wonder, while the Mark is out of Sight, if we are mistaken in our Aim; if we, whose Knowledge of what is present with us, is so superficial and imperfect, should be more unable to make any right Judgment and Estimation of the unseen Issues and Consequences of what we now are doing; and if we are easily induced to hope, that the Way which *seemeth* right, will prove so in *Reality*.

The Defect of human Knowledge may in some Measure account for our being so liable to be imposed upon, and led into Error, by Appearances different from Truth. But this is not the whole: Our Sight is not only weak and insufficient, but it is vitiated too; and the Medium through which it takes its Views is disco-

38 SERMON II.

discoloured, and disabled to represent Things to it, as they really are, and in their proper Light. Prejudice, Passion, and Appetite, if they do not blind the Eye, cause it to see amiss, and to have but a partial, instead of an entire View: That seems eligible, which is agreeable to these, however worthless and hurtful it would be found, if thoroughly examined into and discerned: And hence it is, that, both in private and publick Respects, that which gratifies one Inclination, is often preferred to that, which is for the Good of the whole. Thus an aspiring Mortal indulges his Ambition at the Expence of his Safety and Repose: Thus the Covetous wears himself out, and is in constant Need, with no better Effect, than when he dies himself to make others rich; and thus the Voluptuous and Intemperate will allow him-
self

SERMON II. 39

self in sinful Pleasures which are but for a Moment, tho' they cause him for the Remainder of his wretched Life to drag about a Body racked with Pain, and disabled with Distemper.

Nor have the disorderly Passions and irregular Inclinations of Men a less malignant Influence upon the Welfare of Society, whether Civil or Sacred; but under various Covers and Appearances of Loyalty, Patriotism, Love of Truth, and Zeal for the free Search and Enquiry after it, there have been in all Ages such as have concealed and rendered successful their own Lust of Power, or Itch of Novelty, and Desire of being thought more discerning than the rest of Mankind, and have been able by specious Pretences to embroil and endanger Civil, and to disturb and divide Ecclesiastical Communities.

From

40 SERMON II.

From the Account which hath been given of the Text, and the Proofs which have been offered of its Truth, it may with sufficient Certainty be inferred, that Man stands in Need of a fixed and determinate Rule, by which he may direct his Actions; and that it is not for his Good to be left to himself in the Choice of it. To assist in these Mature Deliberations; of many Men eminent for their Wisdom and Insight into the Exigencies and Interests of their Fellow-Creatures, have been employed for the making and establishing such a Rule as I am speaking of, with regard to Mens Temporal Welfare. And undoubtedly this was the best Expedient that could be made use of in this Respect, and the likeliest to answer the good Purposes it was intended for. But as no human Wisdom can foresee or provide against

such

SERMON II. 41

such Occasions as may arise in the intricate and ever changing Affairs of this World; and as there might be Room for some Doubt, whether meer Consent of Men could in all Cases give sufficient Sanction and Force to their Resolutions, a greater Wisdom, and a more unquestionable Authority than what is meerly human, was needful; nor can we complain that this is wanting to us. God hath been pleased to superadd his Authority to the Ordinances of Man; by him Kings reign, and he hath put Power and the Sword of Justice into their Hands for the Punishment of Evil-doers, and for the Security and Honour of those that do well. Laws made under the Authority and with the Approbation of these, are our Rule, and describe the right Way, in which we may walk with good Warrant for our Safety, and without Need to fear that the

Vol II. G End

42 SERMON II.

End will not answer what the Beginning promises. Laws duly administered are a certain Guide of Life, discerning Right, and discovering what is not so through all the Disguises which are put upon it: These have no Passions to warp and distort them, no Prejudice to blind them, nor any Appetite to give a wrong Determination to them: These will be our Protection and Defence, will safely conduct us, while we with Obedience will follow them.

But as the Spiritual and Eternal Well-Being of Man is that, which it most nearly concerns him not to be mistaken in the Way he takes to attain to it; and as he is in this Respect more than in any other utterly unable to discover or trace out a right Path for himself; as missing the true Way is what will end in the Way even of everlasting Death,

SERMON II. 43

Death, and as the absurd, inhuman and cruel Superstitions and Errors, into which Mankind in almost all Ages and Parts of the World have fallen, do beyond all Question prove how apt Men are to chuse amiss in this most important Affair: So the Goodness and Compassion of God doth in no Instance appear so conspicuous and adorable, as in his graciously condescending to interpose his own Wisdom to supply the Defects of human Knowledge, and in his own revealed Word, and in the Use of his Ordinances to mark out to them that unerring Path, which otherwise they would never have been able to have walked in. In these he hath given us sure Directions how to lead our Lives in a Way which will be pleasing to him, and safe and successful to ourselves; his Laws point it out to us; his Promises and the Examples of his Ser-

44 SERMON II

vants animate us to continue and to proceed in it ; and eternal Glory is the certain End of all.

Let it then be our constant Study to advance forward in this Way : Let the Word of God be our Guide, and we shall never go astray : Let the Promises of God, and the good Examples of his Servants, be our Encouragement : Let the Help of God be our Support and Dependence, while we continue in it. For this let us constantly pray to Him through the Merits and for the Sake of his Son Jesus Christ, and He will be always ready to afford it to us : He will guide us safely through all the perplexed Mazes and Difficulties of this World into the endless Rest and Felicity of a better.

SER.



SERMON III.



Matth. xi. 28.

*Come unto me all ye that labour and
are heavy laden, and I will give
you Rest.*



THAT which all Men do
most earnestly desire, and
few are able to obtain, we
are here by our Saviour directed
how to find, namely *Rest*, or as it
is expressed in the next Verse, *Rest*
unto

46 SERMON III.

unto our Souls : We are told, that if we come to him, how heavily soever we may be laden, and whatever Trouble we may labour under, he will give us Rest, he will free us from that which occasions Uneasiness or Disquiet to us.

I shall in the following Discourse consider Man,

I. *First*, As labouring, and being heavy laden.

II. *Secondly*, As coming to our Lord for Ease. And

III. *Thirdly*, Obtaining of him the Rest which he comes to him for.

I. *First*, I am to consider Man as labouring, and being heavy laden.

And whether we consider Man in a Natural or Religious Capacity, we shall find him labouring under such

SERMON III 47

such Burdens, as without the Help of a greater Strength than his own, he would not be able to bear the Weight of.

If we look upon Man as he is by Nature; full of irregular Appetites and Desires, and in want of every thing that is necessary to appease them; subject to Passions which are easily disturbed, and hard to be quieted; always encompassed with Danger from without, and urged with continual Necessities from within, we shall be convinced, that the Load of Trouble which Nature only lays upon him, must needs be very burdensome, such as he could not endure the Pressure of, without powerful Assistance. How much more then shall we perceive him to stand in Need of Help, if we consider him in a Religious Capacity, as accountable for his Thoughts, Words and Actions, vain and wicked

48 SERMON III

ed as they are, to a God of infinite Justice, of a Knowledge that cannot be imposed upon, and from which nothing can be concealed, and of Power to punish him for every thing that is amiss in him? How impossible must it be for a Man who is a Sinner (a Character from which no Man can pretend to clear himself) to give himself any Ease or Quiet, who, as often as he thinks either of God or of himself, must find so much Cause for Trouble and Affliction; who can consider no Attribute of the Divine Nature, nor any Quality of his own, without Reason to be uneasy at the Comparifon; who cannot think upon the Goodness of God, and the Returns he hath made to it, without being confounded with Shame; or call to Mind the Greatness of God, and his own Weakness and Wickedness, without being oppressed with
Fears

SERMON III. 49

Fears of that Treatment from him, which he is conscious to himself he hath deserved, and from which he hath neither the Power nor the Wisdom to find any Way to escape? It may perhaps be asked, since every Man is an Offender against God, how it comes to pass, that every one is not oppressed with the same Fears, and disturbed with the same uneasy Apprehensions? The Reason of this is, because some Men make use of Remedies against these Fears, which, however insufficient they may at last prove, do nevertheless at the present assuage the Pain; and if they do not remove the Cause, do for a while suspend the feeling of them. It appears, that these Troubles and Disquietudes arise from the Consideration of a Man's Condition: The first and readiest Cure then which offers itself, is for a Man to avoid as much

50 SERMON III.

as he can any Thoughts of so troublesome a Nature. And this is the Course which is generally taken: Men do not for the most part care to search deep enough for the Ground of their Disquiet, nor reflect that, tho' Thinking is the immediate Cause of their Uneasiness, yet there is something further still, which causes them to think in this irksome Manner, and which must be taken away, before they can ever think otherwise. Men strive to keep off uneasy Apprehensions, by employing their Minds upon any thing else, rather than upon themselves: They carry their Thoughts altogether abroad, that they may not be troublesome to them at home; Business and Diversion are so disposed, as that they may take up the Whole of Men's Time, and leave no Intervals of it upon their Hands, lest importunate unwelcome Thoughts should

SERMON III 51

should intrude themselves, and for Want of something else to amuse him, a Man should be forced to consider himself. This, I say, is the Way which Men commonly take to seek for Rest, if they find their Thoughts to grow burdensome to them: They strive to lose the Sense of their Uneasiness, but never think of removing the Cause of it; for which Reason their Condition becomes more and more beyond the Reach of a Remedy, and they are so benumbed with the Application of wrong Means, that they are at length rendered incapable of making any Use of those which are the right. How destructive a Method this must be found in the End, needs no Proof. In all Probability it must lose its Effect much sooner. Nor can the best Contriver so adjust his Matters, but that there will be Seasons in which Consideration

52 SERMON III.

will break in upon him, and find Opportunities to startle and perplex, and confound him with a true Representation of his Condition: The Bed of Sickness will sometimes debar him from Pleasure, from Study, and from Business; nor, when every thing is serious about him, will it be any Time for Mirth; nor will he be able any longer to hide from himself the State of his Soul, when his Body is no longer in a Condition to assist him in the doing it. And whither then must he turn for Ease? or what Remedy can he then make use of? When the Indisposition of both Soul and Body confines all his Thoughts to himself, and makes him incapable of employing them upon any other Objects, how utterly unable must he be to support himself, if at the same Time that he is most weak, that Burden fall upon him with aggravated Weight, which

SERMON III 53

which in his firmest Strength he found himself unequal to, and insufficient for, and used all the Arts he could to fly from under the Pressure of. It is certainly much the wisest Course we can take to seek in a better and more proper Season for Rest, than to defer doing this, till we shall neither be able to look for it, nor to enjoy it. And if we would do this effectually, and with Assurance of Success, we must hearken to our Blessed Saviour's Call in my Text; we must *come unto him*, and he *will give us the Rest* we seek for. This brings me in the

II. *Second Place* to consider Man as coming to our Lord for Rest.

That Man who stands in need of Rest, in what Sense soever it is taken, whether in a Religious or Natural one, will best find it by the Di-

54 SERMON III.

Direction of my Text. That a Man is said to want Ease in a Religious Sense is to be imputed to his Sins, the Conscience of which fills his Soul with Terroures, and his Face with Confusion: While he considers himself, he is not only ashamed of his Vileness, but affrighted at his Danger: The Justice of God denounces Vengeance against him, and his Power besets him on every Side, nor has he any Means in his own Hands of delivering himself from them. It is no Wonder then, if he cannot be at Ease; and it is reasonable to think, that he will gladly lay hold upon any Offer from another, of that Deliverance and Rest, which he is not able to procure for himself; that he will readily go to him, who calls him in so inviting and encouraging a Manner. His greatest Concern will be to know how he may go to him, who promi-

SERMON III 55

promises with so much Assurance that Rest, which he stands in so much Need of ; and there are several Means which he must use in order to this. As,

First, He must go to Christ by Faith : He must believe him to be able to make his Word good, or else he will scarce be very earnest in striving to come to him. And how extensive is the Faith that is included in this short Description ! There is nothing necessary to be believed of Jesus Christ our Lord, but what is comprehended in saying that we believe him to be able to give us Rest from our Sins. His Sufferings and his Glory, the very Depth and Height of his Excellence and Love must be taken in to make this Faith reasonable, and fit to be received of Men ; nor can any one shew good Grounds for his Hope of Salvation through Jesus Christ, without acknowledging

56 SERMON III.

knowledging that he believes him to have suffered for our Sins, which except he had been Man, he could not have done; and that his Merits were sufficient to make Satisfaction for the Sins of all Mankind, which had he not been God, they would not have been. In order therefore to a Man's coming to Christ, he must first believe in him that he is able to free him from his Sin, which is the Cause of his Disquiet: And he that doth thus come to him, doth by that very Belief obtain Rest to his Soul: He makes Application for Help to one from whom he is persuaded he shall receive it, and his Troubles are of course at an End, when he is freed from those Fears which occasioned them.

Secondly, He must come to Christ by Imitation; he must pursue the Way in which he walked, if he would come into that Rest into which

SERMON III. 57

which he is entred : And this our Lord himself requires in the Words immediately following and explaining my Text, *Take my Yoke upon you*, that is, Enter into my Service, *and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in Heart, and ye shall find Rest unto your Souls.* As a firm Faith in the Sufficiency of our Lord's Merits, and his Ability to give us Rest, is necessary to bring us to him to seek it ; so a Practice agreeable to that Persuasion, a Life led in Imitation of his, and in order to that, the having our Desires and Affections conformed to the Rule of his perfect and exemplary Goodness, is equally requisite to the same End. We must *learn of him* ; learn, how he entred himself into his Rest, that using the same Means by which he successfully sought it, we may find the same Effect of our Endeavours. Particu-

Vol. II. I larly,

58 SERMON II.

larly, and as in a more distinguish'd Manner effectual to this Purpose, we must learn his Meekness and Humility, if we desire to find Rest to our Souls; these Virtues having of all others the most direct Tendency to the preserving the Tranquility and Quiet of those Souls in which they find Reception, as they restrain and assuage those tumultuous and unruly Passions, which are the principal and most frequent, if not only Causes of Trouble and Uneasiness to them. A

Third Means, by which we must come to him who thus kindly calls us, and which is necessary, in order to our being able to make use of the other two, is that of earnest and unwearied Prayer to God for his Help to bring us to him, without which Help we shall never be able to surmount those Difficulties, which the otherwise unsubdued Pride of
what

SERMON III 59

what we account our Reason will lay in the Way to obstruct our Belief of him, and in Conjunction wherewith the Strength of our corrupt Inclinations and Lusts will contend against our Imitation of him, and Obedience to him. Our Lord declares, *John vi. 44. No Man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him; except God vouchsafe his Assistance by disposing his Soul and Affections to give Belief to the Truth, and yield Obedience to the Precepts of the Religion, which he is the Author of.* And how necessary in order to the obtaining any Help from God, Prayer to him is, is better known to all who have read his Word, and therein have been told what his Will is, than to need any Argument to prove it.

Thus have I endeavoured to shew how, or by what means we are to

60 SERMON III.

come to our Lord: We are to have *Faith in him*, that is, we are to believe that he is able, by freeing us from the Guilt and Danger of our Sins, to give us Rest from our Fears, and Uneasiness by reason of them: We are *to learn* of him, and to be his Servants, which is the same Thing; for to imitate his Example, and to obey his Commands, is all one; and we are to pray to God for his Help, because as that is the only Way to obtain it, so without that Assistance, we can neither believe in him, nor be obedient to him.

I proceed in the

III. *Third Place* to give an Account of the effectual Power of those Means of coming to him, and obtaining Rest from him.

And it will soon appear, that upon what Account soever we stand in need of Rest, we shall best obtain it by

SERMON III. 61

by coming to him. In the Beginning of this Discourse I considered Man as subject to Uneasiness and Disquiet, either in a Natural, or a Religious Capacity: And in each of these he may find Rest, by coming to his Redeemer, when it will be in vain for him to seek it any where else. Doth he find himself uneasy at the Wants he feels, at the Meanness of his Condition, either for Quality or Estate? Doth he find himself exposed to Contempt from those above him, or to Envy from his Inferiors? Is he apt to be disturbed by Indignities and Injuries, which he conceives are offered to him? And would he find an effectual Remedy for these Kinds of Uneasinesses? Let him go to his Lord, and *learn of him to be meek and lowly in Heart*: Let him not think himself too good to feel Want, or to be exposed to ill Usage, when

62 SERMON III.

when the greatest and best of all that ever were Partakers of Human Nature had not *where to lay his Head*, and was severely exercised with the Contradictions of Sinners; when he who was the Son of God, as well as of Man, patiently put up Injuries, and heard his good Name traduced, and his Life unjustly condemned, without so much as *opening his Mouth*. But these are Uneasinesses of a tolerable Kind, compared with those which Man is subject to, if we consider him as a Creature capable of Religious Relations, as accountable to God, and obliged to serve him. Is a Man conscious to himself (and who is not?) that he hath not served his God as he ought to do? Is he sensible, that he must one Day answer for that his Default? Is he apprehensive that Infinite Vengeance will be the Consequence of Infinite Majesty and Justice offended?

SERMON III 63

ed? And is his Soul thereupon oppressed with the dreadful Fear and Expectation of it? Whither then, except to his Redeemer, can he fly for Rest; except to him, who calls him in my Text? What, or who else is there, that is sufficient to Mediate on his Behalf? Who can ask of Infinite Justice a Pardon for that which hath been done in Despight of Divine Greatness? Or who, except He, can offer such a Satisfaction as shall equal the Offence, and atone for the Offender? And He is sufficiently qualified to do all this; Nor is there any Apprehension of Danger by reason of Sin so great, as that he cannot give us Ease from it. Doth our Conscience reproach us with Ingratitude and Wickedness? Doth it represent to us, that our Sins are innumerable, that the Vengeance of God is due to them, and that we are not able of ourselves to satisfy his

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64 SERMON III.

his Justice any otherwise than by undergoing the Punishment due to them, that transgress his righteous Laws? Are our Souls filled with such Fears and Apprehensions as these? And do we look upon our Circumstances as not only dangerous, but desperate? Is this our Condition? We are then qualified to answer the Call in my Text, we are those who *labour and are heavy laden*; and our Remedy is laid before us, we are to go to Jesus Christ for Rest, and he hath assured us he will give it to us. The Faith and Belief, by which we apply ourselves to him, will assure us that no Sins we have been guilty of can equal the Righteousness by which he can approve us in the Sight of God; that we cannot deserve more intense Misery, than what he hath undergone on our Behalf; and that not only Deliverance from Death, but

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SERMON III. 65

the Gift of Eternal Life also is committed to his Disposal, and promised by him to such as in Earnest come to him for them.

It is for want of coming to this Bestower of eternal Peace, that our Minds are at all disquieted, and our Souls disturbed with any Fears of our being in a Danger from which we cannot be delivered: The Wrath of God will no longer affright us from hoping for his Mercy, if we do but consider, that that Wrath is done away, and that God is well-pleased with us in this *his Beloved Son*: Nor can the Assaults and Suggestions of our Ghostly Enemies be of Strength enough to overcome our Faith, if we consider, that we are assured of his Assistance against them, who hath already overcome them, and will deliver us from them. It is here then that we must seek for Rest, whenever we are in

66 SERMON III.

want of it: It is by coming to our Lord, that the impatient, the discontented, and above all the wounded and fainting Spirit must find its Ease and Comfort: From his Example it will best learn Patience, and meek Contentment: Through Faith in his Merits it will gain Rest from the Threats of Sin, and from the Terrours of a guilty Conscience; and by Obedience to, and Imitation of him, it will be directed, when it has obtained this Rest, to preserve and to enjoy it.

I shall conclude the Whole with observing, that besides the several Means I have more largely insisted on, there is one Qualification, which I have but just mentioned, that is necessary in order to our obtaining the Rest spoken of in my Text; and that is, that before a Man seeks it, and indeed in order to his having

SERMON III. 67

any Desire after it, he must be sufficiently sensible and weary of the Burden of his Sins. They who have no Apprehensions of this Sort; and look not upon themselves to be in any Danger upon this Account, are not the Persons that are here called upon, that are invited to this Rest: They have another Rest of their own making, a presumptuous Security, to which our Lord, while he was upon Earth, did not call Men: He did not call those who thought themselves *righteous*, but such as were Self-convicted *Sinners*, to *Repentance*; nor doth he here invite those to enter into his Rest, who already are at Ease, but those that *labour and are heavy laden* with their Sins.

Let us therefore be taught, that the Way to this Rest is through the Difficulties of Repentance; that we must in the first Place be thoroughly

68 · SERMON III.

sensible of the Weight and Burden of Sin, and find the Load of it too heavy to be borne, before we shall effectually desire or endeavour to be freed from it. And let us not be discouraged, if searching into our Condition, we find ourselves struck with Horrour upon seeing into how great Danger our Sins have brought us; but let us rather direct our Eyes to him, who shews us the Way to escape from that Danger, who invites us to quit our Fears and Troubles with our Sins, and by following his Steps to enter into his Rest, to come to that endless State of Peace and Happiness which he enjoys himself, and which he offers unto us.



SER.



SERMON IV.



Mark vii. Part of the 37th Verse.

*—He maketh both the Deaf to
bear, and the Dumb to speak.*

The whole Verse runs thus:

*And were beyond Measure astonish'd,
saying, He hath done all Things
well: He maketh both the Deaf
to hear, and the Dumb to speak.*

THE Context contains an
Account of a Charitable
Miracle which our Saviour
Jesus Christ wrought, in giving
Speech

70 SERMON IV.

Speech and Hearing to one who before was deficient in both. And, notwithstanding that the outward Application, which our Lord made to the indisposed Organs of the Person, who was brought to him for Help, might give Men some Ground to imagine that what he then did, was effected by natural Means only; yet to those who were best able to judge, those who saw what was done, and knew the Persons it was done to and by, it appeared after another Manner: They were (as we are here told) *beyond Measure astonished at it*, which they would not have been, if they had not been aware of something very extraordinary, something more than natural in it. It was this Apprehension which their Admiration arose from, and which (however strictly they were charged to the contrary) they could not forbear expressing in the most

SERMON IV. 71

most grateful Manner, by celebrating the Goodness, and spreading the Praise both of the Action, and of him who had done it. There was the greater Reason for them to do thus, because (as we find, *Mark* iii. 23.) there wanted not some, who tho' they could not deny the Works of our Lord to be miraculous, would not however allow them to be good, or that they were wrought by the Agency of a good Spirit. But certainly these acted more agreeably to Reason and to Truth, who, seeing the Work to be good, concluded that he who did it, was so too. And, from the beneficial Use he had made of his Power in that Action, were satisfied that in all his other Works he had done likewise; he not only had done Things miraculously Great, and Good, but he had done them *Well*, had done them with a good Intention,

72 SERMON IV.

tion, to a good Purpose, and by the Operation of a good Spirit.

And thus it is, that we ought to judge of the Pretensions of such as alledge Miracles, in Support of the Authority of their Mission, and their Doctrines. Are the Miracles they pretend to of a beneficial Nature? And are they produced for the giving Credit and Maintenance to such Doctrines, as tend to the Advancement of the Glory of God, and to the Welfare and Salvation of Mankind? In this Case all is done *well*, and we may know the Spirit by which this is done to be *Good*, by *his Fruits*. We may know that, as *Satan is not divided against himself*, it is by no Agency or Interposition of his, that such Things are done, as have an immediate, and visible Tendency to the Destruction of his own Power, and Kingdom. If this Rule were to be applied in examin-
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SERMON IV. 73

ing the Legends of Miracles, which are to be met with among those that are Professors of false Religions, or those who have adulterated and corrupted the True, how soon would the Authority and Credit of them sink, and be at an End? How great a Number of them (supposing them to be true in Fact) would be found to have been to no possible good Purpose, but on the contrary designed to carry on an Imposition, or for the sake of Gain or Power? How many would be rejected as trifling, ridiculous, and as having no Consequence at all, at least to any thing that is good? And what Truth could they be alledged for the Proof of, excepting this only, That Things out of the ordinary Course of Nature have been brought to pass by evil Spirits, and therefore, that, before we believe any Miracle to be wrought by the Power, and

Vol. II L in

74 SERMON IV.

in the Name of God, we should be convinced, not only that a more than Natural Power was necessary for the doing it, but also that the Work was good in itself, and worthy of him to whom we ascribe it.

Such was the Miracle referred to in my Text. As for the Power which appeared in it, I shall not so much insist upon that, as not being the most certain Mark of a Miracle's being wrought in the Name of God. It may be sufficient to affirm, that a more than Natural Power was required so soon and so easily to remove from the Person it was wrought upon, such great Defects, as those of Speech and Hearing. But certainly the apparent Goodness of this wonderful Work is a convincing Proof, that the Power by which it was done, was that of a good and beneficent Being, of a God who regards with Compassion, and relieves
with

SERMON IV. 75

with Mercy, the Wants of those who apply themselves to him for his effectual Help. How many and how important were the Advantages at once conferred upon the Subject of this Miracle, and of how much Good to him are these, few Words are expressive!

I shall not scruple to assert, that a Man may pass through the World more comfortably, and find more agreeable Entertainment in it, who is imperfect in any other bodily Respect, than he can be supposed to do, who is in the Condition in which the Person in the Context was, who was brought to our Lord. He that is in this Condition, is cut off from all Intercourse with the noblest Part of the Creation, and excepting his own Thoughts alone, hath nothing but meer Body to converse with. His Eye indeed may yield him agreeable and entertaining Delights,

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76 SERMON IV.

while it represents to him those various Beauties of the Universe, which lie within its Reach. But that which exceeds them all in Value, the reasonable Soul stands in need of other Instruments for the discovering its Excellencies; and he, that can neither hear nor speak, can neither discern the admirable Endowments and Perfections of other Men's Minds, nor disclose to them those of his own. This which I now mention, hath respect to the least important Part of the Benefit which the Person, upon whom this Miracle was wrought, received by it. For however Conversation may be the more agreeable Entertainment, yet Instruction, which he became thereby capable of, was more necessary for, and advantageous to him; as it is much more for a Man's real Good to learn the Way to eternal Glory, and Felicity in Heaven,

SERMON IV. 77

Heaven, than it can be for him only to pass a short Time with Pleasure and Delight upon Earth. God, infinite in Wisdom, knows how to instruct those in his Will, who are incapable of receiving Instruction from any, but himself. But, as (generally speaking) *Faith, by which we are saved, cometh by Hearing the Word of God*, Men ought to account it the greatest of Blessings to be rendred able to walk in this ordinary, and known authorized Way to Everlasting Life; to be able to hear those Preachers whom God sends, and to communicate to others those Saving Truths, which we may thus be taught by them.—And thus much with regard to this Miracle, according to the Literal Account of it, and to the meer Fact and History, as here recorded.

I shall, in the Remainder of this Discourse, take Notice of another Kind

78 SERMON IV.

Kind of Deafness, different indeed from that I have been speaking of, but which is of a worse Nature, and which stands in need of as great Power to remedy it as the other, and which may be allowed to be considered by us, as what we are more nearly concerned in, and which therefore it will behove us to be delivered from, if we find ourselves under the Influence of it. We shall better understand what this is, if we consider what followed upon this miraculous Work which our Lord wrought. Those who saw it concluded very justly, that He who had done it, had done well, not only in this, but in all Things. The natural Consequence of this Persuasion one would expect should have been, that they should have looked upon him as one sent with Authority from God, and that they should have hearkened to, and
recei-

SERMON IV. 79

received what he declared to them, as the Truth and Word of God. But this (for ought that appears to us) was what did not follow with the Generality of them. There were indeed Multitudes that occasionally followed him from Place to Place, but it was with other Purposes than to be his Disciples *indeed*, or that his Word should abide with them. Some came out of Curiosity, in hopes of seeing his mighty Works: Others to be healed of their bodily Infirmities; Others to put captious and ensnaring Questions to him, that they might insult him if he did not answer them, and betray and destroy him if he did: And others still followed him, only because they *had eaten of his Loaves, and been filled*. And yet they all alike saw his Miracles, and heard his Word. But tho' they had seen him *do such Works, as no Man could*
do

80 SERMON IV

do except God were with him; tho' they acknowledged that he spake as Man never spake; and tho' the Goodness of his Life was so conspicuous, and irreproveable, yet we do not find that, till after his leaving the World, and sending the Holy Ghost to his Disciples, the Number of those that believed on him, and durst make Profession of that their Belief, was at all considerable.

This may prove, that there is another Kind of Deafness, or Inability in Men to hear, which more than any external Application is necessary for the removing of, and which is still to be found in the World in too plentiful an Abundance. Were it not so, what Cause can be assigned, for which Men should be able even but to suspend their Belief of the Truths of Christianity, when they are proposed to them,

SERMON IV. 81

them, much more that they should deny, contend against, and hope to disprove them? Doth then the Religion of Christ stand in need of any more, or better Evidence to approve itself to our Belief? Are not the Facts it is founded upon sufficiently attested; and are not the Doctrines which it delivers consistent with themselves, and worthy of the Divine Wisdom and Goodness of the Author of them? What is it therefore that is so hard to be believed? Or how comes it to pass that all Men do not readily assent to that, which is not only true in itself, but so much to their Advantage that it should be true? It must be answered, that the Reason of all this is to be found, not in that which is to be believed, but in those who should believe it.

And indeed if we consider the Disposition Mankind was in to en-

82 SERMON IV.

certain these Truths, when they
 were first preached to the World,
 we shall perceive that to bring Men
 to give Ear to them, was a Work of
 much the same Nature with that in
 the Text. It was *making the Deaf*
to hear. The Minds of Men were
 taken up with Opinions utterly in-
 consistent with those which then
 were offered to them; and these
 Opinions were venerable, and, as
 they accounted, sacred by having
 been embraced as the Religion of
 that, and many foregoing Ages;
 So that the absurdest Notions, which
 the Preachers of Christianity char-
 ged the Heathens with Folly for
 maintaining, appeared highly rea-
 sonable to them who had always re-
 ceived them for true, with an impli-
 cit Belief. So strong a Prepossession
 must needs render Men who were
 under it utterly Deaf, as to the
 Preaching of the Gospel; nor could
 there

SERMON IV. 83

there be any Room made for the Reception of the Truth, till numerous and long establish'd Errors were first taken out of the Way. And in what Manner could any Application be made for this Purpose? Must it be, by strict Argument, to the Reason of Mankind? Alas! that was wholly pre-engag'd to the other Side: And to adhere to the old Religion, to hold with the Generality of Mankind, and to think present Enjoyments more eligible than present Sufferings, tho' to be rewarded with future invifible Happiness, was what would appear most rational to most Men; and to preach any thing to the contrary was what would be, and in Fact was, as *St. Paul* tells us (*1 Cor. ii. 14.*) *esteemed Foolishness* by those who had been used to think in the Manner I have mentioned; which was the Case of almost all the

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84 SERMON IV.

World. And, what would render this Deafness more obstinate and incurable, and utterly stop Men's Ears against the Preaching of the Gospel, was this, That, in this Particular, Men's Affections, and their Reasons, tho' in other Cases they seldom hold together, would entirely accord, and mutually strengthen the Prejudices which they had against the Truth. The Appetites of Men would resist, and to their utmost struggle against that Religion which made the mortifying and subduing them its very first Demand, which required a Practice directly contrary to their Tendency, and which proposed no other Rewards for that Practice, than such as they had no Taste of, or Desire after. Thus effectually was every way stopped in which the Word of Life could be proposed to the Hearing of Men. Strict Argument could take no hold

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of

SERMON IV. 85

of their Reason; Persuasive Eloquence had no Influence upon their Affections; Their Ears were stopped against the Voice of Truth, *tho' it charmed never so wisely.*

And yet we find that (notwithstanding all these seeming insuperable Difficulties) the Gospel did gain Belief in the World; and that neither the Prejudices and Pride of Human Reason, nor the Reluctance of the Lusts of the Flesh were able to put a Stop to its Progress.

This must be ascribed altogether to the Power of God, who (having first miraculously enabled such Men to preach the Mysteries of his Kingdom to all others, who 'till then were altogether ignorant of them themselves, and in that Sense *having made the Dumb to speak;*) by his Holy Spirit disposed Men to hearken to these, and enabled them to receive the Truths which they delivered,

86 SERMON IV

vered, taking from them whatever
 else, and without his Operation,
 would have been an unfurmounta-
 ble Hindrance to their Conviction
 and Faith. Thus did he in a more
 extensive and beneficial Manner re-
 peat his former Miracle: *He did all
 things Well; He made both the Deaf
 to hear, and the Dumb to speak.*
 How Happy would it be for the World,
 if there was no Occasion to bring
 Observations into it now from what
 I have been speaking of. But if
 there be still such Men as stop their
 Ears against the Gospel of Christ,
 and will not submit their Faith to
 its Myſteries, their Reason to its Au-
 thority, or their Practice to its Pre-
 cepts, we must look upon their
 Condition as a very dangerous one,
 and which requires no less a Power
 than that of God himself to rescue
 them from it. Nor should we o-
 mit our best charitable Endeavours,
 in

SERMON IV. 87

in Imitation of those mentioned in the Context *to bring them to God*, and to pray to him to save them, who alone is able to do it. And if we find the good Effect of such Application to him, whether it be upon ourselves, or others, in being enabled to hear, and to obey what the Holy Ghost speaketh to us, let us know that it is his Work, and therefore let us thankfully render to him the whole Praise, and Honour of it.



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SERMON IV. 87

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 the Context to bring them to God,
 and to pray to him to save them;
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 plication to him, whether it be up-
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 the Holy Ghost speaketh to us, let
 us know that it is his Work, and
 therefore let us thankfully tender to
 him the whole Praise, and Honour
 of it.



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SERMON V.



1 Cor. x. 12.

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.



THE first Word of my Text is a Direction to us to look back to what had gone before, and teaches us, that the Precept here delivered is drawn by way of Inference from those Examples which the Apostle had been reciting,
 Vol. II N and

90 SERMON V.

and which, as he tells the *Corinthians* in the foregoing Verse, *are written for our Admonition, upon whom the Ends of the World are come.* The Examples which he proposes to them are those of the ancient *Israëlites*, who tho' they were the peculiar People of God, and tho' they had been delivered out of a cruel Slavery, after which they were miraculously conducted and sustained by him, and admitted into Covenant with him; yet did they so far provoke God by their Sins as to forfeit and fall from his Favour, for which they were punished and destroyed by him in the Wilderness, without being permitted to enter into the Possession of that good Land, which he had promised to give them. The Admonition which the Apostle deduces from these Examples is contained in my Text: *Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.* In

SERMON V. 91

In the following Discourse I shall endeavour to state the Meaning and Usefulness of this Admonition; and thereby to recommend it to your Consideration and Observance. That I may do this the more effectually, I shall shew,

I. *First*, Who is intended in the Text by him that thinketh he standeth.

II. *Secondly*, The dangerous Tendency which a Man's thinking he standeth hath to his falling; And,

III. *Thirdly*, The Efficacy and Sufficiency of that Rule and Admonition to preserve a Man from falling.

I. *First*, I am to shew, who is intended in my Text by him, *that thinketh he standeth*.

92 SERMON V

Whosoever considers the Condition he is in, will quickly apprehend himself to be surrounded with Danger, and be convinced that it behoves him to be very circumspect, lest he fall into Inconvenience or Destruction. How this Observation holds true in relation to the Natural Condition of every Man, and what continual Peril he is in with respect to the Health and Safety of his Body is very well understood, and generally speaking very carefully regarded: Nor is it the proper Business of the Place I stand in to press Men to employ their principal Care in avoiding Temporal Dangers only. The Preservation of the Souls of Men from falling into eternal Destruction is here intended, and it is this that requires that Heed to be taken, which my Text recommends.

Man considered in a Religious Capacity, as a Creature accountable
to

S E R M O N V. 93

to God, created by him to serve and please him, and accordingly to be rewarded or punished by him, is on every side beset with Enemies which oppose him, and strive to hinder him from answering the noblest Ends for which he was brought into Being, and to make him fall from God's Favour and Happiness into Misery and Ruin. And every Man who duly considers the Danger he is in from these, will learn how much it concerns him to provide for Safety and Deliverance from them, and will make it his principal Study and Endeavour to be in a Condition of putting an End to, or at least of resisting and hoping to overcome the Attempts that are made against his Soul by the Enemies of his Salvation. The Man who is persuaded that he hath put himself into this Condition, is he who, in the Language of my Text,

thinketh

94 SERMON IV.

thinketh he standeth, whatever the Foundation of that, his Persuasion may be: He thinketh himself to stand in Safety, in the Favour of God, and in a Capacity of attaining eternal Life, notwithstanding all that Power, or Subtlety, or Malice of the Devil, or the Temptations of the World, and of his own Lusts; can do to deprive him of them, or to make him fall from them. This may be sufficient to shew whom the Text intends by him *that thinketh he standeth*. I shall therefore proceed in the

H. Second Place, to consider the dangerous Tendency, which a Man's thinking he standeth hath to make him fall.

Blessed and truly happy is that good Christian, who *thinking that he standeth*, makes a wise and a right Use of that Persuasion. He, who
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SERMON V. 95

grounding this Assurance of his Salvation upon the Merits of the Blood of Christ, and upon the never-failing Truth of the Promises of God, makes it his constant Care to preserve so comfortable, so inestimable a Dependence; He, who in Contemplation of the Goodness of God, loves him above all Things, and under the powerful Influence of that Love makes it his whole Delight, and bends all his Efforts to serve and to please him, who hath been so gracious to him: The more assuredly this Man thinks he stands, the more effectual Heed will he take lest he fall; because as there is nothing which he will value so much as this Assurance, so there can be nothing which he will fear so much as the Loss of it. He will therefore always strive to preserve that Love and Favour of God, to which his Hopes of Salvation are owing; and he

96 SERMON V.

he will carefully avoid provoking him to withdraw that Love, either by Disobedience to his Will, or Neglect of his Service.

But there are those, who with an equal, or it may be a greater Measure of Assurance, than what such a one as I have been speaking of is possessed of, are yet so unhappy as to fall, because they think they stand so surely, as that they are under no Necessity of taking any Heed to preserve their Station. The dangerous Tendency of such a Security is very apparent, whether we consider the Grounds or the Effects of it. The Ground of this Security is Presumption of the most dangerous Nature: It is presuming, either that God will keep us from falling without our taking heed on our Part, or that we by our own Strength are able to stand without any Assistance or Support from God's Grace. In
either

SERMON V. 97

either of these Cases, the Danger is too visible to be doubted of, each of them being equally unwarrantable; the first of them being a tempting of God, instead of depending upon him, and the other being a dishonouring of God by trusting in ourselves. The first of them naturally produces the slackening and ceasing from our Endeavours as being unnecessary and unavailable, and thereby as far as may be disabling and evacuating all the Commandments of God, and all the Obedience due to him from his Creatures; and the second provokes him to withdraw his Grace, without the Aid and Power of which all the Endeavours of Man, how necessary and requisite soever they may be, will not be sufficient to keep him from falling. These, I say, are the natural Effects of such a thinking we stand as I am speaking of, the being persuaded

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Vol. II. ded

98 SERMON V.

ded that we are out of any Danger of falling. But I shall be a little more particular in representing this, and recommending it to your serious Consideration.

First then, he *that thinketh he standeth*, and is beyond all Danger of falling, will be brought into Danger by that very Opinion; because he will be tempted by it to take no Heed to himself, nor to use any Endeavour on his Part to preserve himself from it. Salvation is what we hope for, and this the holy Scripture tells us we are not to neglect, but we are to *work it out with Fear and Trembling*. The Way to attain to it is therein represented in such a Manner as is sufficient to teach us that it is both difficult and dangerous. It is called a *Pilgrimage*, a Passage through a *Vale of Tears*, through a *Gate* which is so *strait*, that it requires our *striving to enter in at it*,
bab
.II. and

SERMON V. 99

and so obscure and intricate is the Way to it, that *there are but few that find it.* Thus the Difficulty of the Way to Salvation is represented to us; and for the Danger, it is called a *Warfare*, in which we have powerful, vigilant and irreconcilable Enemies to fight against without any Truce or Intermision even to our Lives End. This is the Condition in which we stand; and all our Circumspection and Industry, all our Resolution and Constancy would be too little to support us in, and to carry us through it, if we had not a greater Strength than our own, to make us *sufficient for these Things.* But what Inducement can he have to use all this Labour, and to put himself upon all this irksome and perplexing Duty, who thinks himself safe already beyond the Reach of Danger? He is not very likely to concern himself with the

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Way

100 SERMON IV.

Way to Salvation, who is persuaded that he hath already reached so effectually towards the End of it, as that he cannot fail or come short of it. It is much more probable, that such a one will think it altogether needless for him to use any Endeavour after that Salvation, which he thinks himself to be already secure of, or that he should employ any Vigilance against, or apprehend any Danger from those Enemies, whom he thinks he has already overcome, and utterly disabled from hurting him. In the mean time, while he thus wraps himself up in a presumptuous and mistaken Security, and speaks Peace to himself before there is any, his Adversary the Devil is incessantly at Work to improve the great Advantage which he gives him, by his Want of Vigilance, and taking no Heed to resist him. Nor need we doubt what the Success is like

SERMON IV. 101

like to prove, when a powerful and experienced Enemy is diligent and unwearied in his Attempts, and no Care is taken, nor any Watch kept against him.

Secondly, As the Opinion of a Man's standing out of Danger hath a natural Tendency to his falling, because it renders him careless of his Safety, and takes him off from that Industry and Watchfulness which he would otherwise employ for his own Preservation; so likewise it will be found to be of destructive Consequence to him, because it will not fail to provoke God to withhold from him the Assistance of his Grace, without which all his Endeavours, if he did use them, would be of no Avail, nor would he be able to stand. As we are not so far to presume upon God's Protection, as to make no Use of those Means which he hath put
into

102 SERMON IV

into our Power for our own Safety and Preservation; so much less are we to depend upon our own Abilities and Endeavours so far, as to think we stand in no Need of his Grace to support us, and to bring us out of the Dangers we are on all Sides surrounded with.

Without this Grace of God to direct, to restrain, to assist us, there is nothing so wicked, so absurd, so weak, but we are in Danger of falling into it, and of having our Salvation endangered by it. What can we think too wicked for us to incur the Guilt of, when we find into what heinous Crimes the best and greatest of Men, when left to themselves, have fallen; when we read, that *David* was guilty of Adultery and Murder, *Solomon* of Idolatry, *Noah* of Drunkenness, and *Peter* of Apostacy? What can we think too absurd and weak, too irrational
and

SERMON V. 103

and irreconcilable not only to Virtue, but even to common Sense, for us to be drawn into, when we consider how Men fall not only into such Vices and Sins, as their Condition and Time of Life yield them peculiar Temptations to, but into such also as appear to be directly contrary to their Circumstances and Ages, and to which it is not easy to imagine how they could have any Inducement at all. *bb* For Instance; Poverty is acknowledged to tempt Men to envy their happier Superiors, and to repine at and to complain of their own Necessities : But who would expect, as in the Cases of *Saul* and *Ahab*, to find even the greatest and the wealthiest of Men complaining of their Wants, and envying those who are far inferior to them both in Power and Riches : Again; Wealth is apt to tempt Men to Pride and Luxury, and a mean
and

104 SERMON IV

and needy Condition to put others upon base and unworthy Services and Compliances: But it is no difficult Matter to find Pride and Debauchery still accompanying the Necessities to which they have reduced Men, while those who overflow with Riches and Power can stoop to the vilest and most dishonourable Actions, and bring themselves under the most abject Dependencies; in order to add to that exorbitant Abundance which they already possess, but which they have neither Merit to deserve, nor Souls to enjoy. Once more: Young Men are very apt to run eagerly into Extravagancies, and pursue the Pleasures of this Life without Controul; and to them, if to any, they may be called Natural: But to see one that groans under the Feebleness and Decay of old Age, using Arts to make the most detestable Gaieties of Life
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SERMON V. 105

palatable, Nature almost shrinks at it ; and it is hard to think, if we had not a Certainty of the Truth of it, that there should be any such. Many such-like Instances might be produced, were there Occasion for it, of Men's running into Sins and Follies, which we must be at a Loss to discover what Temptations they had to them.

Now for Creatures who are capable of such incongruous, such unaccountable Failings and Weaknesses, to think that they are able by their own Strength and Wisdom to stand against the Power and Wiles of the Devil is still a fresh Proof of unreasonable Pride and Presumption : And as we are assured that God doth abhor and resist this Pride, and give his Grace only to those who are so humble as to understand and to acknowledge that they are in Need of it, so we may conclude that all

106 SERMON V.

the Heed which Men can take, without depending upon God for his Assistance, will not be sufficient to preserve them from falling. So that a careless Security upon whatever it is grounded, whether upon a mistaken Notion of our having no Need, while we leave the whole Care and Work of our Salvation to God, to use any Endeavours, or to take any Heed to ourselves; or whether it spring from an Opinion of our being able of ourselves to make good our Station, is of the most dangerous and destructive Consequence to us, and we shall be sure to fall, if we provoke God to forsake us by presuming either upon his Assistance without our own Endeavours, or upon our own Powers without his Grace. Let us therefore, how firmly soever we may think we stand, take good and constant Heed lest we fall; for by so doing we may be
safe,

SERMON V. 107

safe, and effectually escape the Dangers we are encompassed with : As I shall now very briefly shew in the

III. *Third Place*, and so conclude.

Do the Dangers we are in arise from the Temptations we are beset with? But unless we are wanting to ourselves, there are no Temptations but what with taking good Heed we may be delivered from. Let us first call upon God for his Assistance and Protection; and we may be certain that *God is faithful, who will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able; but will with the Temptation also make a Way to escape, that we may be able to bear it;* as we read in the Verse immediately following my Text. He is faithful, and he hath promised, that if we put our Trust in him, *he will not*

108 SERMON V.

leave us nor forsake us. Upon that Promise therefore let us depend, and pray to him to make it good to us, and then we may be sure, that *tho' we walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, no Evil shall come nigh us, we shall be safe under his Wings, and his Faithfulness and Truth shall be our Shield and Buckler.* And when we have thus called God to our Assistance, let us diligently apply ourselves, with the Help of his Grace which is sufficient for us, and will not be wanting to us, to be vigilant and careful for our own Safety. Let us watch against and steadfastly oppose our Adversary the Devil, who as a roaring Lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. 1 Pet. v. 8. The Word of God will enable us to discover his Designs, and the Grace of God to defeat his Power. Let us not therefore be discouraged from resist-

SERMON V. 109

resisting our Spiritual Enemy, and being ever upon our Guard against him. Let us indeed *walk circum-spectly*, as those who have a difficult and dangerous Way to go, but yet with Courage, as having good Direction and sufficient Assistance to carry us through it. And let us be the more effectually disposed to take this Heed, by this important and animating Consideration : That if we endure to the End, we shall receive a Crown of Glory, which is placed before us as the Reward of our Constancy and Perseverance : Which that God the Righteous Judge may bestow upon us, let us earnestly beseech him through the Mediation of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

SER.

SEEMON V. 100

resisting our Spiritual Enemy, and
 being ever upon our Guard against
 him. Let us indeed avoid circum-
 spectly, as those who have a difficult
 and dangerous Way to go, but yet
 with Courage, as having good Di-
 rection and sufficient Assistance to
 carry us through it. And let us be
 the more effectually disposed to take
 this Heed, by this important and
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 we endure to the End, we shall re-
 ceive a Crown of Glory, which is
 placed before us as the Reward of
 our Constancy and Perseverance:
 Which that God the Righteous
 Judge may bestow upon us, let us
 earnestly beseech him through the
 Mediation of his Son Jesus Christ
 our Lord. Amen.

SEER



SERMON VI.

Preached on Good-Friday.



John xi. 47, 48, 49, 50.

*Then gathered the Chief Priests and
the Pharisees a Council, and said,
What do we? for this Man doeth
many Miracles. If we let him
thus alone, all Men will believe on
him; and the Romans shall come
and take away both our Place and
Nation.*

And

112 SERMON VI.

And one of them named Caiphas, being the High Priest that same Year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider, that it is expedient for us, that one Man should die for the People, and that the whole Nation perish not.

FOR the Occasion of this Consultation of the principal Persons of the Jewish Nation, we must look back to the foregoing Part of the Chapter, in which we have an Account, and that a very circumstantial and particular one, of our Lord Jesus Christ his raising up *Lazarus* from the Dead. In that Account we find this Miracle to have been both very great and very well, and beyond all Cavil attested. It could not be objected here, that *Lazarus* had only been in a Trance, or seemingly dead for that Time. His Sister, who,

SERMON VI. 113

who, as it appears in this Relation, was a more tender Lover of him than to give him over while there was Room for any Hopes of that Kind, endeavours to dissuade our Lord from what he gave Orders for the doing of, by intimating that he was not only dead, but corrupted in the Grave. And as the Place where this Miracle of raising him again to Life was near to *Jerusalem*, and as many of the Jews from thence were come to comfort those that mourned for him, there did not want a sufficient Number of Witnesses to prove the Truth of this Account beyond all Contradiction. For all of them that were present were satisfied of the Reality of this Miracle, and all of them bare Testimony to it, tho' not all of them with the same Intention. Many of them (and it is to be wondred, how it could be possible that all of them

Vol. II. Q did

114 SERMON VI.

did not do so) upon seeing this, *believed on him*, as we are told at the 45th Verse of this Chapter; that is, were thereupon convinced that he was the true *Messiah*, whom they so much expected. And these made the proper Use and Interpretation of this wonderful Performance, while they looked upon the Doer of it, as a Person *sent from God*, and thought him to be endued with his Authority, while they saw that he was endued with his Power.

But some it seems there were, who used the Knowledge and Assurance, which they had by being Witnesses of this, to a very different Purpose. They bare Witness to the Truth of it against him that wrought it; and made that the Ground of an Information against him, which should have been to them an indisputable Proof of his Divine and Sovereign Right and Power. We are

told

SERMON VI. 115

told to this Effect in the 46th Verse, that *some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what Things Jesus had done.* It is a too convincing and common Proof of the corrupt and sinful Nature of Mankind, and of the great Influence which the Devil hath over it, that there is much Mixture of Envy and Malice discernable in it, and upon all Occasions discovering itself in Men's Words and Actions. It is not only a seemingly more happy and elevated State and Condition that irritates this restless and implacable Humour, but a greater Measure of Desert and Goodness, whether it meet with any other Return or not, will be sure to meet with this: And Men can as quietly and contentedly permit others to be more fortunate and exalted than themselves, as to be better and more deserving. It must have been chiefly

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upon

116 SERMON VI.

upon this Account, that a Miracle of Goodness and Love to the Living and the Dead could give Provocation to any Men to go about to occasion Trouble to and contrive the Destruction of the Person that wrought it. For here is no Mention of any one that had Reason to be aggrieved at what our Saviour did: We are not told, that any private Contests or Disputes arose upon it, or that any one was injured by it. And the Publick, which holds it just and prudent to punish such as rob it of its Subjects by taking away their Lives, should, one would imagine, have thought itself obliged to give Rewards and Thanks to him, who in so extraordinary a Manner had restored to it one, whom it had lost beyond Recovery, except he had thus given him back to it. But alas! this Matter was weighed in a different Ballance, and looked upon

with

SERMON VI. 117

with different Thoughts. Instead of examining into the Action itself, and from the miraculous Nature of it acknowledging the Divine Authority of him that performed it; they looked forward by the Rules of human Policy and temporal Interest to the Consequences which might be apprehended from it. They first considered the Loss of their own Esteem and Reverence among the People, if all Men should believe on him, as they could not chuse but do, should he go on to work such Miracles: This they knew they should soon be deprived of, having already experienced his perfect Knowledge and Hatred of their Hypocrisy and Ignorance, and their counterfeit Holiness, and groundless Pretences to Wisdom and Understanding of the Will of God. The Question therefore before them, and which we may suppose to have been the

118 SERMON VI.

the principal Cause of this Assembly, was, whether they should, to preserve their own Authority, and the Opinion which the People conceived of them, oppose the Progress of that Belief in Jesus Christ, which his Miracles, as they themselves acknowledged, could not fail to obtain. In fewer Words; the Question was, whether for the sake of God's Truth, which they were convinced by his Miracles he was a Teacher of, they should be content to lose their own Reputation and Esteem. And that was a Question which admitted of no great Debate; as we may conclude from *John xii. 42.* where we are told, that *they loved the Praise of Men more than the Praise of God:* And for that very Reason, tho' they believed on him, that is, were convinced of his being, what he declared himself to be, the *Messiah*, upon
seeing

SERMON VI. 119

seeing the Miracles which he wrought, yet they would not *confess him* as such, *lest they should be put out of the Synagogue.* An undeniable Instance this, that Want of Courage to assert the Truth, when the Maintenance of it may make Men liable to temporal Disgrace or Loss, is as prejudicial in some respect to it, and as fatal to its Progress or Establishment, as the openly opposing it. For had *those many of the Chief Rulers* here spoken of, boldly declared their Conviction and Belief, and supported the Arguments for it with their Authority and Esteem, it can hardly be doubted, but that their Example would have had more Followers among the People, who were universally convinced of the Truth of our Lord's Doctrine; than those could have found, who against plain Truth and incontestible Evidence should have persuaded

120 SERMON VI.

suaded them to oppose it, and disbelieve it. But other Considerations were more powerful with them than the Love of Truth, which whatever Influence it had upon their Reason, had it seems little or none upon their Affections: Nor did they find themselves disposed to serve it, when they imagined it would be to their own Damage and temporal Loss. We are not therefore much to wonder, that in this Consult of the Jewish Rulers, there is no Mention of any Difference of Opinions among them which appeared by Debate, but that they immediately concluded upon its being proposed, that it was *expedient*, that one Man, how good and excellent soever he were, should perish, rather than that the *whole Nation* should be destroyed.

It appears by the Manner of the High Priest's Expression, that it is a Phrase

SERMON VI. 121

Phrase authorized by long Practice and Antiquity for Men, when they speak only of their own particular Interests or Opinions, to call them those of their whole Church or Nation, and to cover their own Ambition or Selfishness with the Pretence of Love to and Fear for the Publick.

The Rulers of the Jews were it seems apprehensive, that *the Romans would come and take away both their Place and Nation.* Did they mean by this, that the Romans would come and deprive the People of their Liberties, and make Alterations in their established Worship? No certainly; this could not be their Meaning: It was too late for them to be troubled with the Fear of that; the Romans having done it already, and reduced them under their Dominion, and left them no more Liberty, either Civil or Eccle-
 Vol. II. R fiaftical,

122 SERMON VI.

sistical, than they pleased ; but had
 made many Encroachments and Al-
 terations, and were daily making
 more with regard to both. But the
 true Meaning of this popular Pre-
 tence was ; they feared, if any Di-
 sturbance was given to the Romans
 by the People's believing Jesus to be
 the *Messiah*, and thereupon resort-
 ing to him, they themselves might
 be deprived of the small Stock of
 Authority and Power which the
 Romans permitted them to retain
 and exercise under them, for not
 having been more vigilant and care-
 ful to prevent any such Trouble.
 If it shall be said, that they feared
 that the People looking upon Jesus
 as the *Messiah*, would take up Arms
 against the Romans, and thereby
 provoke them to destroy the whole
 Nation ; it will be readily answered,
 that those who were persuaded that
 Jesus was the Christ, as he had gi-
 ven

SERMON VI. 123

ven them all sufficient Reason to believe, had no Cause to be troubled with these Apprehensions : For they did not think it would be dangerous to take up Arms under the Conduct of the *Messiah*, but expected that he would lead their Nation to certain Victory, not only over the Romans, but over all the World. It was therefore a Care for their own particular Interests, not for those of the Publick, that persuaded them that it was *expedient* He should die, who if he lived, would, as they had Reason to know, soon divest them of their borrowed Authority and undeserved Honour. And therefore they had no more to consider of, but the Pretence they should use, in order to the compassing of this End so necessary to their Security. It was by no means proper to declare the true Reason : They therefore made use of two others,

124 SERMON VI.

suited to the Places where they produced them, and such as they knew could not fail of succeeding. To their own Countrymen they represented him as a *Blasphemer*, that is, as one who by their Law was in the most unpardonable Manner guilty of *Death*, Mark xiv. 63, 64. And to the Romans they accused him as an *Enemy to Cæsar*, as one who made himself a King, and would attempt to deliver his Country from the Roman Power. These were Allegations, which no Innocence or Excellence could protect him against the Force of. The exceeding Goodness of his Life and Doctrines, and the numberless Miracles of Kindness he wrought, were not sufficient to hinder the whole Multitude (that was in effect the whole Jewish Nation, it being then the Passover) from prosecuting him to Death, while they looked upon him as a *Blas-*

SERMON VI 125

Blasphemer, as one guilty of Treason against God. Nor did his acknowledged and confessed Innocence and Inoffensiveness any more avail with *Pilate*, after he was persuaded to look upon him as an *Enemy to Caesar*, as dangerous to his Government. It was a Sign that *Pilate* in his own Nature was not wholly destitute of all true Roman Magnanimity and Love to Justice, since he so openly declared our Lord's Innocence, and so unwillingly delivered him up to the Power and Malice of his Persecutors. But cruel Policy and Reason of State, with the Thoughts of his own Safety, overcame this: And he could be content to let a guiltless Person be tormented to Death, not because it was just in itself, but because it was *expedient* for him, that it should be so.

Thus

126 SERMON VI.

Thus far have I considered the Account which my Text gives of the Reason of the Jews resolving to destroy our Saviour, and the Motives which disposed them to it, And certainly it appears from what hath been said, that the implacable Malice and Cruelty, the deep Hypocrisy, the real Selfishness, the deliberate Injustice of their Proceedings, render this the most wicked Action, and the Doers and Contrivers of it the most detestable and inexcusable Wretches that ever were in the World.

In *Gen. xlix. 6, 7.* *Jacob* speaks with the utmost Abhorrence and Detestation of that Revenge, which his Sons *Simeon* and *Levi* took upon the *Shechemites* for the Dishonour done by them to their Family: *O my Soul,* saith he, *come not thou into their Secret; unto their Assembly, mine Honour, be not thou united:*
for

SERMON VI. 127

for in their Anger they slew a Man.

But if this could be reckoned an execrable Crime where the Provocation was so great, and the Revenge so justifiable by the Rules of human Honour, what must be thought of the cool and considerate Wickedness of those who without any Injury offered, or any Crime committed, could from a Miracle of Goodness take Occasion to resolve upon the Death of the best and most excellent Person that ever was in the World, and could put that Resolution in Practice with the bitterest and most insolent Malice and Cruelty that they could contrive to express? Perhaps we in considering these Things, shall be ready to wonder how human Nature could be capable of so much Wickedness, how it could enter into the Heart of Man to act so unjustly and so cruelly. But we shall find still more Cause to wonder,

128 SERMON VI

wonder, if in searching into the Reason of all this, we shall find that the same Thing which produced this amazing Complication of Wickedness, is what we are too apt to be led by ourselves, and to have a principal Regard to in all that we do, and in most Matters to give ourselves entirely up to the Direction of; I mean the Consideration mentioned in the Text, not of what is just in itself, or agreeable to the Will of God, which always ought to be the Rule of our Actions, but of what is expedient for us, which too often it is. He that wrongs another in any Manner, doth it for the most part without any particular Ill-Will or Malice to him: He doth it not because it will be a Loss to the other, but because it will be a Gain or Convenience to himself. And he that neglects the Duty he owes to God, nor breaks his Commands,

SERMON VI. 129

mands, finds himself generally disposed so to do, because he finds it inconvenient, inexpedient, inconsistent with his temporal Affairs, or present Interest, to perform what is required of him. This is the general Case of Mankind, and the Multitudes of them that are thus disposed, help to keep one another in Countenance, and to make what is thus done scarce accounted criminal or blame-worthy.

But would Men consider how far this Motive hath carried some, and what prodigious Sins have been committed in consequence of it; would they consider, that what only makes them defraud their Neighbour, or neglect the Service of God, hath stirred up others to put the World into Confusion, to destroy Thousands of Men's Lives, and above all to shed the Blood of the Son of God himself, they would in

130 SERMON VI.

all Probability learn to be afraid of complying in the least with that Temptation, or being upon any Account brought to do any thing which they know to be wicked or unlawful, only because they look upon it to be *expedient*, to be profitable, or advantageous for them : They would strive to stifle the first Motions of that Inclination, which otherwise might grow too powerful for them to resist, and would at length carry them to the doing Things, which at present they would tremble at the Thoughts or Mention of.

Thus much have I offered in Consequence of what I at first mentioned, the Motive or Inducement upon which the Persecutors of our Lord proceeded ; which how ill soever we may think of their Actions, is the very same with what we are too apt to be influenced by in performing

SERMON VI. 131

forming our own. We, like the High Priest in my Text, are apt to have a very great Regard in whatsoever we do to that which is *expedient* for us, how inconsistent soever it may be either with our own Duty, or with the Safety and Right of other Men.

But let us go a little further with the Evangelist, and consider his Remark upon the Advice which the wicked High Priest gave with as wicked an Intention: This we meet with in the Words immediately following my Text. *And this spake he, not of himself, but being High-Priest that Year he prophesied, that Jesus should die for that Nation: And not for that Nation only, but that also he should gather together in one, the Children of God that were scattered abroad.* So that through the infinite Mercy of God, the greatest Wickedness that ever was

132 SERMON VI.

contributed towards bringing about the greatest and most meritorious Goodness; and the High Priest of a wicked Counsellor became a true Prophet.

How unsearchable is the Wisdom of God! and his Ways how much past our finding out! How was the Subtlety of the Devil defeated here, when that Death of his greatest Adversary, which he tempted his Children wickedly to procure, proved his own Confusion, and the Destruction of his Empire! And how was the Wisdom of Men turned into Foolishness, when having lifted up the Son of Man upon the Cross, to stop the People from following him, they thereby drew all Men unto him! How did the wicked Fierceness of Men turn in this respect to the Praise of God! They tore the Body of Jesus with cruel Scourges; but with those
Stripes

SERMON VI. 133

Stripes we are healed : They insulted and smote him ; but it was *for our Transgressions* that he was *bruised* : They *numbred him among the Transgressors* ; but it was the Punishment of our Iniquities which he bare : They *pierced his Side* to give him Death ; but thereby they opened a *Fountain for our Sins and Uncleannefs*, and a *Way to eternal Life* : They pretended to put him to Death for the Safety of their own Nation at the most : But thereby Salvation is obtained for all Mankind. Thus may we see the abundant Mercy of God in thus overruling the worst Actions and Intentions of Men to the best Purposes, and may learn as to detest and abhor the one, so to adore and praise the other.

We may from hence also consider, not only that the Sins of other Men, but our own also bore a Part
in

134 SERMON VI.

in the Sufferings of our Lord, and contributed to the occasioning of them. It was not only because those Jews were more wicked than all the rest of the World, that Christ was delivered up by them to be crucified, but because all Men were Sinners: And if we hope for any Benefit from his Sufferings, we must look upon our Sins as the Causes of them, and thereupon be resolutely determined to break them off, and to be washed from the Guilt of them by that Bloud which he shed purposely for that End.

When we look upon the Accounts of our Lord's bitter Passion, even human Sympathy and the Tenderness of Nature would force us to compassionate and regret the Misery and Pains, which so excellent and amiable a Person was, undeservedly on his own Account, afflicted with, and to abhor the savage and more than

SERMON VI. 135

than barbarous Cruelty and Hardness of Heart which they manifested, who persecuted him to Death ; even tho' we had no other Concern in or Relation to this Affair. How much more then must we be affected, when we consider the Person thus dying, as dying for us, as laying down his Life in extremest Torments for our Sakes ! How must we sympathize with his Agonies, when we look upon him as our greatest Benefactor, and as the truest Lover and Friend to us ! And how must we abhor our own Sins, when upon Enquiry we shall find that it was upon the Account of these, as well as those of others, that he was thus wounded, bruised, afflicted, and cut off.

Our blessed Lord justly reproaches the Jews, because that at the same Time they were persecuting him, they pretended to disown the Wick-
edness

136 SERMON VI

edness of their Fathers, who in like manner persecuted the Prophets which were sent to them, and said, *If we had been in the Days of our Fathers, we would not have been Partakers with them in the Bloud of the Prophets.* Mat. xxiii. 30. Nor will the like Reproach be less due to us, if while we detest the Wickedness of those who killed our Lord, we still entertain those Sins for which he died, and which occasioned his Sufferings more than the bare Actions of the Jews abstracted from their Wickedness could have done.

Would we then give full Proof of our Disallowance of the Wickedness of his Murderers? let us deny ourselves all sinful Enjoyments; lest allowing ourselves in them, we ourselves become of the Number of his Persecutors. Would we shew our Indignation at the Injuries offered to him? let us no longer entertain his
Enemies

SERMON VI. 137

Enemies in our Bosoms : Let us for
 his Sake crucify our inordinate Ap-
 petites and Lusts, considering, that
 except we do so, be our Pretences
 what they will, and our Detestation
 of the Wickedness of his Murderers
 never so loudly and passionately ex-
 pressed, we do in Deed and Reality
 not only applaud, but repeat and
 imitate what they did ; we likewise
crucify afresh to ourselves the Lord
of Life, and again put him to an
open Shame : Let us rather learn
 to make a right Use of the Advice
 of the High Priest, tho' then given
 with a bad Intention : Let us be
 convinced that it is *expedient* for us,
 that our Sins, however dear to us,
 should be destroyed, rather than
 that the Whole of us, our Souls
 and Bodies should perish everlasting-
 ly ; and then we shall find the
 Truth of the Prophecy contained in
 his Speech ; we shall to our un-
 Vol. II T speakable

138 SERMON VI.

speakable Comfort find, that Christ died, *not for that Nation only,* but also for the rest of Mankind, and for us as much as for any. Which that all of us may do, may God grant for the Sake of the same Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*



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Vol. II



SERMON VII.

Preached on Easter-Day.



I Cor. xv. 42, 43.

So also is the Resurrection of the Dead : It is sown in Corruption, it is raised in Incorruption :

It is sown in Dishonour, it is raised in Glory : It is sown in Weakness, it is raised in Power.



THE Death and Resurrection of our Bodies is always an useful Subject of our Meditations, but more especially proper at
 T 2 this

140 SERMON VII.

this Season, in which with our Fellow-Christians we thankfully commemorate the most important Death and Resurrection that ever was or shall be, and in which all others are so nearly interested, that of Jesus Christ our Lord. And in this Chapter these momentous Subjects are expressed and satisfactorily handled, the Doctrines of them explained, the Objections against them answered, the Manner of them described, and the Consequences of them discovered.

In my Text especially, and in the rest of that Period of which it makes a Part, we meet with a very exact and remarkable Description of the different Conditions in which an human Body is committed to the Earth, and raised again from it.

The Apostle had undertaken to obviate the common Cavil against this Doctrine, namely, *How are the Dead*

SERMON VII. 141

Dead raised up, and with what Body do they come? How is it possible that the Dead, the Body that is corrupted and turned to Dust should be restored to Life, and how can those far and long disjoined Parts of it, after so many Changes, be found and brought together again, so as to constitute again the same Body? For the rendring this the less incredible, the Apostle sets such Questions to work to answer other Difficulties in Things which every Spring is an incontestable Evidence of the Truth of, and yet of which they can as little tell, how those Things are done. After the Seed of Corn is committed to the Earth, and is corrupted and dead in it, how is that raised up, and with what Body doth it come? Is it not with the same Kind of Body? Doth not the same Seed always produce the same Grain? And is not God who giveth
it

142 SERMON VII.

it the same Body, able by his Almighty Power to do the same for us?

The Seed that is sown is destined to Corruption, dead, buried in the Earth, and trodden under Foot; but with how great a Difference from this doth it rise? From how small a Grain (to use the Words of a Learned Paraphrast) how great an Increase is made? How flourishing is the Verdure? How multiplied the Quantity? How are its Roots spread in the Ground, and its Head raised above that Earth, with which it once was covered? *So also, saith the Apostle in my Text, is the Resurrection of the dead Bodies of Men; they are the same in Matter and Kind, but very much changed and improved in Condition: As will more fully and particularly appear, while we consider what he hath delivered in this Place,*

I. *First,*

SERMON VII. 143

I. *First*, With regard to all Men in general ; And,

II. *Secondly*, With regard to our Lord Jesus Christ, whose Resurrection is the First Fruits and Forerunner of our own.

I. *First*, Let us consider the Apostle's Words with regard to all Men in general.

The Design of them is professedly to shew the Condition in which a human Body goes into the Grave, and that in which it is again raised up from it. We are told, that *it is sown in Corruption, in Dishonour, and in Weakness*; and that *it is raised in Incorruption, in Glory, and in Power*: Certainly a very great Change this, and very much for the better. Of the former Part of this Description, that of the Condition of the Body in Death, we may be able

144 SERMON VII

able to judge, and it pleases God to furnish us with, *alafs!* very frequently repeated Opportunities of observing, how truly and elegantly these Words are spoken.

When through the Force of a violent and noisom Disease the Body is brought down to the Dust of Death, its Complexion changed and defiled without, and all within is unsound and putrified, how properly may it be said of it, that it is *sown in Corruption!* When all that was amiable or valuable in it is gone, when its Beauty is deformed, its erect and majestick Figure is unframed, all its Marks of Distinction fallen off, and nothing remaining to it, but what is shocking and offensive to the Sight of others, and which therefore they find themselves under a Necessity of taking out of the way, and covering with the Earth, it may then truly be said to be

SERMON VII. 145

be *sown in Dishonour*, to be treated as all other Things are when in Disgrace, that is, to be laid aside, and delivered up to Obscurity, when they have lost their Worth, and are no longer useful and beneficial to themselves or others. Again: When Sickness hath deprived a Man not only of his Beauty, but his Strength; when all his Nerves and Sinews are unstrung, when the strongest Arm is not able to lift up itself, or bear its own Weight, when the most vigorous and active are so disabled, as not to have Power enough to defend themselves against the Encroaching and Assaults of Worms, it is evident that they *are sown in Weakness*, and that whatever Measure they might possess of it while living, they have no Power or Strength remaining to them in the Grave.

These are all of them the Circumstances in which most Men, and

146 SERMON VII.

some or other of them those in which all Men do go out of this World: It is in this corrupted, dishonoured and disabled State and Condition that their Bodies are *sown*, are committed to the Earth, and left to remain therein, 'till God shall raise them up again, and restore Life to them.

What I have said upon this is therefore necessary and useful, nor improper to be taken Notice of and insisted upon even upon this Day, which requires Triumph, and Thoughts that may be reckoned of a less mortifying and melancholy Nature: For certainly the best Way we can take to obtain just Notions of that Power and Mercy which God will manifest in raising up our Bodies in a better Condition, will be for us rightly to consider, in how unlikely and unpromising a State we shall lay them down. What that

SERMON VII. 147

that better Condition is, and how exactly our Resurrection is the Reverse of our Death, my Text may suffice to teach us.

The Body at the Resurrection is *raised in Incorruption* : Its Condition is no longer what it was in this Life, frail, subject to such Pains or Diseases as might weaken or destroy it : Its Health will be perpetual, nothing from within will disorder its Constitution, nor any thing from without occasion any Change in it : In the Condition it is raised in, in the same it will continue, not for a determinate and short Space of Time, not for a Space that may be measured even by the Years of many Generations, but for ever, to the Days of Eternity. This is to be *raised in Incorruption*.

We are further told, *It is raised in Glory*. It is raised in the highest Perfection, and to the greatest De-

148 SERMON VII

gree of Happiness and Honour, which human Nature is capable of being exalted to. If true Excellence be the Form of, be that which constitutes true Glory, he certainly rises in it, who is raised in the Condition here intended; who rises without Defect, without Blemish; who rises to the Possession of the highest Dignity and Honour, that of a Crown and Kingdom in Heaven, and to the Enjoyment of the greatest Happiness, that of the Presence of God, and of the Society of Spirits blessed and glorified like himself.

Again: Our Body is said by the Apostle to be *raised in Power*: It will no longer be a Clog to the Soul, and a Burden to itself; it will no longer be subject to the Weakness of Disease, but all its Faculties, as they will be enlarged, and its Powers increased, as its Abilities to do and to receive

SERMON VII. 149

receive Good (the only Uses for which Power is valuable, or ought to be desired or employed) will be improved and stretched to their utmost Extent, so they will always remain still increasing, nor will any Weariness or Infirmary ever interrupt or lessen them.

Thus much may suffice to be said of the Death and Resurrection of Man, as the different Conditions of them are here represented by the Apostle.

Would we more fully and effectually apprehend these Truths, would we have something more than meer Words and Argument to fix them in our Souls, and to give us entire Conviction of them, let us, in the

II. *Second Place*, Consider the Doctrine of the Resurrection with regard to our Lord Jesus Christ,
and

150 SERMON VII.

and we shall find all that is here said in Words, made evident by Proof, and by Example.

His Body indeed, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, *did not see Corruption*; and it was highly equitable, that in this Respect he should be exempted from the general Law of Mankind: For as his Soul alone saw no Sin, which is properly the Corruption and Pollution of that, it was fit that that Body, which had been the Dwelling of so pure and immaculate an Inhabitant, should derive from it a Privilege of continuing undefiled, and exempted from Corruption. But it *was sown in Dishonour*: It was deprived of Life with as many concurring Circumstances of Ignominy and Disgrace, perhaps, as ever any Man's Body was: It was torn with Thorns, with Scourges, with Nails; it was pierced with a Spear, and to add to these

SERMON VII. 151

these Pains the more, whatever could be done to aggravate them with Proofs of Spight and Scorn, was abundantly practiced: He was spit upon, stricken, mocked, and exposed to be the Mark at once of publick Hatred, and of publick Contempt. Yet this Body thus dishonoured, thus disgraced, and with so much Scorn deprived of Life, was soon restored to it again, and that *in Glory*: It was raised in such a Condition as made those, who before had been the Mockers and Tormentors of it to shake, and *become as dead Men* at its Appearance: Immortal Glory and immortal Life were now given to it, Angels were its Attendants, and after a few Days conversing upon Earth with his Disciples, the Throne of God and the Kingdom of Heaven and Earth were its Possession. Nor less truly may the Body of Christ be said to be

152 SERMON VII.

be *sown in Weakness, and raised in Power* : It was deprived of Life, it was actually, and as much as ever any human Body was, dead, and divested of all its Powers. But our Lord was raised again in a far different Condition. *All Power in Heaven and in Earth* were then given to him ; *all Enemies were put under his Feet*, even that last and most powerful of Enemies *Death* itself, and from thenceforth of his Power and Kingdom there shall be no End or Measure.

Thus have I spoken of the different States of the human Body in its Death, and in its Resurrection, as it is described in this Chapter, and as it is exemplified in the victorious and triumphant Resurrection of our Saviour Jesus Christ. I shall now make some Use of what hath been said, and so conclude.

First,

SERMON VII 153

First, From the Account we have heard of what our Bodies are, and what they must be, we may learn what Value to set upon them. As they are at present corruptible, weak, and liable to many afflicting and disgraceful Circumstances, we should not think too highly of them: We should not be immoderately proud of any imagined Excellency in them, or fondly desirous of retaining them when God calls for them, and unwilling to lay down so heavy and uneasy a Load as they are capable of becoming to us: We ought from considering what they are, to learn to be willing to part with them, and not to make it our principal Care to provide for the gratifying of that, which in a short Time will be never the better for all our Endeavours of that Kind, nor any longer capable of enjoying the Fruits of them. However, if we

Vol. II. X are

154 SERMON VII.

are desirous to do the best we can for them, we are here directed after what Manner to do that most effectually: We find that these Bodies, in what Condition soever they lie down in the Grave, will one Day be raised again to live for ever; and from this we may be sure, that the truest Love we can shew to them now, is to provide, that it may be well with them then. For unless this be done, tho' the Body be *raised in Incorruption*, it will be so only, that it may be capable of enduring an Eternity of Torments, and all the *Power* it will have, will be that of bearing more Misery than human Nature now is capable of undergoing: Nor will the *Glory* it is to be *raised in*, redound to itself, or reflect any Honour upon it; but it will be to the Glory of the Justice of God, who is equally glorified in punishing obstinate Wickedness, and

SERMON VII. 155

in shewing Mercy upon Obedience if sincere, however otherwise imperfect and deficient. If we now endeavour, instead of *making Provision for the Flesh to fulfil the Lusts thereof*, to adorn our Souls with Goodness; if we diligently apply ourselves to tread in the Steps and imitate the Example of Jesus Christ, while we live here, be the Circumstances of our Departure out of this World never so ignominious, never so noisom, never so painful, (and they cannot be more afflicting and disgraceful than his were) our Rising again, like his, will be with incorruptible Glory, and with the most enlarged Powers of enjoying infinite and eternal Happiness.

Secondly and lastly, From the Knowledge of our Condition after our rising again, to which the Resurrection of our Lord is the surest and most satisfactory Way of

156 SERMON VII.

attaining, from the great Usefulness of that Knowledge, from the powerful Influence it hath upon our Lives, and from the firm Support and effectual Comfort which it will afford us in the Hour of the Death whether of our Friends, or of ourselves, we shall be disposed to render Thanks to God, who is the Author of this Knowledge, and to Jesus Christ who is the Purchaser and Bestower of this Resurrection. We ought with Hearts full of the most grateful Sentiments to remember that Resurrection of his, which is the uncontrollable Evidence, the first Fruits, the sure Earnest and Pledge of our own: And we ought to learn by *cleansing ourselves from all Filthiness both of Flesh and Spirit, by denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and living soberly, righteously and godly in this present World,* so to prepare ourselves for that our rising again,

SERMON VII. 157

again, as that it may become the Matter of our Desires, and not of our Fears ; as that the Expectation of it may be delightful and encouraging to us now, and the Effect of it may be happy and glorious to us hereafter.



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SERMON VII 157

again, as that it may become the
Matter of our Desire, and not of
our Fears; as that the Expectation
of it may be delightful and encour-
aging to us now, and the Effect of
it may be happy and glorious to us

hereafter. I have now to address
you on this subject, and to show

that it is the Will of God, that we
should be holy, and that we should

be holy, and that we should be
holy, and that we should be holy,

and that we should be holy, and
that we should be holy, and that

we should be holy, and that we
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holy, and that we should be holy,

and that we should be holy, and
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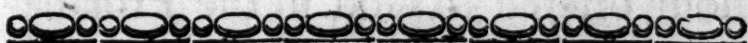
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SERMON VIII.

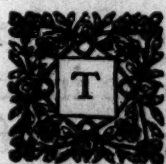
Preached on Easter-Day.



John xi. 18, 19.

*Then answered the Jews, and said
unto him, what Sign shewest thou
unto us, seeing that thou doest these
things?*

*Jesus answered, and said unto them,
destroy this Temple, and in three
Days I will raise it up.*



H A T we may the better
understand the Intent of
these Words, it will be ne-
cessary to consider, upon what Oc-
casion

160 SERMON VIII.

cation they were spoken. And from the 13th Verse to the Words of my Text, we shall meet with an Account of this ; and shall be informed for what Reason the Jews asked our Saviour this Question, and what those Things were, which he had done. We shall find, that he, being provoked by the Dishonour offered to God in the Profanation of the Temple, had in a very extraordinary Manner exercised that sovereign Authority which he knew himself to be possessed of, by driving out of the House of God all those Things which were so unfit to be in it, and which so ill became the Holiness and Majesty of his Father's Courts. Now if we consider, that those very Things, which our blessed Saviour drove out of the Temple, were warranted to be in it both by Custom, the Permission of the Jewish Government, and by Con-

SERMON VIII. 161

Convenience, as being thereby more ready to be made use of in the Service required there to be performed; we shall then apprehend the Reason, why the Jews called for some Proof of that Authority, which he exercised in this Act. The Action itself was an Act of Sovereignty and Jurisdiction; and our Saviour, tho' assured in himself of his Divine Right as Head of the Church to reform it, appeared to the Jews as a private Person, without any Badges or Ensigns of publick Power and Authority. The Meaning therefore of the Question which they asked him, amounts to thus much. Thou hast taken upon thee to perform an Act of sovereign Power, without any human Right or Authority to qualify thee to do it; and therefore we demand of thee a Sign, by which we may know, whether God hath given thee any Power immediately.

162 SERMON VIII.

diately from himself for the doing it?

Having thus briefly shewn upon what Account the Jews asked our Saviour this Question, and what the Meaning of the Question is, I shall next proceed to consider his Answer to it, and in doing this I shall,

I. *First*, Shew the Meaning of that Answer which our Saviour was pleased to make to the Jews.

II. *Secondly*, I shall endeavour to assign some Reasons for which it might be thought, he would not gratify the Jews, in shewing them a Sign or Miracle upon their demanding it.

I. *First*, I am to shew the Meaning of that Answer which our Saviour was pleased to make to the Jews; *Destroy this Temple, and in three Days I will raise it up.*

This

SERMON VIII. 163

This might rather be looked upon as an Amusement, than a direct Answer ; for the Jews were hardly like to destroy a Work of so much Cost and long Continuance, only for the sake of making that Experiment, especially considering that by their Answer it appears, they thought it impossible to be done ; *Forty and six Years was this Temple in building. and wilt thou rear it up in three Days ?* But, it is immediately added by the Evangelist, *He spake of the Temple of his Body.* The Answer of our Saviour therefore was true, tho' not intelligible to the Jews, whose Minds were too much filled with Thoughts of their own Temple in which they then were, to have Room for any Apprehensions of our Saviour's Body being a Temple by the Presence of God in it. And tho' he did not at the present work a Sign or Miracle upon their Demand,

164 SERMON VIII.

mand, yet he foretold and referred them to one which he designed to work afterwards, and that such a one as would sufficiently shew, that he who did it could not want Divine Authority for every thing that he did. The Answer is a Prophecy of a future Miracle, which would be wrought by him, and that at no very great Distance of Time: For the Conspiracy of the Jews, which terminated in his Death, began very soon after this Passage, as we may find by consulting the Accounts given of this Action of our Saviour's by the other Evangelists, and especially by St. *Luke* in the ninth Chapter of his Gospel at the 47th Verse, where having in the two immediately foregoing Verses given a Relation of Christ's having driven the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple, he tells us, that *the Chief Priests and Scribes, and the chief of the People*

SERMON VIII. 165

People sought to destroy him. It may however be thought, that since it was in our Saviour's Power to have convinced the People of his Divine Authority by working a Miracle at the present, and since, as we may be ready to imagine, so incontestable a Proof would have caused them to have believed on him, considering this, I say, it may be thought, that it would have been more agreeable to our Saviour's Goodness to have given them that Satisfaction, and have prevented their great Wickedness, and his own Sufferings, which so soon after followed. I shall therefore proceed in the

II. *Second* Place, to assign some Reasons, for which it may be thought, that our Saviour did not think good to gratify the Jews in working a Miracle, upon their demanding it. And,

First,

166 SERMON VIII.

First, We are to consider, that God alone is the proper Judge of the Time and Manner in which Miracles are to be wrought. It is only by his Power that they are performed; and we are not to imagine that it can be fit or decent for Men his Creatures and Vassals to take upon them to prescribe to him, or that they should dare to lay Claim to any Right of determining when and after what Manner he should extraordinarily exert his Almighty Power, which tho' he condescends to use it for our Good and Benefit, we are not to think that he will employ it according to our Will and Pleasure.

Almighty God, as he hath Regard to the Good of his Creatures, so hath he, and that in a greater Measure, to his own Majesty and Glory: And as upon the first of these Accounts he is always ready to
hear

SERMON VIII 167

hear such of our Prayers, as we may make to him for Things that really conduce to our Benefit, so for the sake of the latter, the maintaining of his own Majesty, and teaching us the Reverence due to it, will he be sure to reject such Petitions as are dictated to us by idle and useless Curiosity; nor will it be consistent with his Wisdom to prostitute the Exercise of his infinite Power by making it subservient to the Directions of those Men, who desire the Proofs of it rather to gratify their Humours, than to convince their Understandings, and to rectify their Belief.

This therefore might be one Reason, why our Saviour did not think good to give the Jews the Satisfaction they demanded: They demanded a Miracle, when he knew it was not necessary to work one; and his own infinite Knowledge rather than
their

168 SERMON VIII.

their importunate Curiosity was fit-
test to direct him what he had to
do. Had the Action which he did
been questionable in itself, whether
it had been agreeable to the Word
of God, or had it been done by
him without sufficient Authority
within himself, there might have
been some Reason, both why they
should have exacted from him some
Proof of the Right by which he
acted, and why he should have
been desirous to give it. But since
he had given them such a Proof
from Scripture, as convinced them,
that the Practice which he condemn-
ed was unlawful (as appears by their
Question, which was not whether
the Thing he had done was good in
itself, but only what Authority he
did it by) and since he was satisfied
within himself of his own Right of
doing it, there was no Reason, ei-
ther why they should desire a Mira-
cle

SERMON VIII. 169

cle to prove that to be the Will of God, which they already knew to be so, or why our Saviour should work one upon their desiring of it.

I might further confirm what I have been saying by other Examples of the like Nature, from which it will appear, that our Saviour did not think the Curiosity or Importunity of Men any Reason for working Miracles. Thus in *Matth. xii. 38, &c.* where a Demand of the like Nature met with an Answer very like to this, accompanied with a very severe Reproof to those who made it. Thus likewise in *Luke xxiii. 8, 9.* we find that *Herod*, when Christ was brought before him, *was exceedingly glad*, because among other Things, *he hoped to have seen some Miracle done by him*: Yet when he had, as we may well conclude, expressed his Desire of it, we find he was disappointed, and no Notice

Vol. II. Z taken

170 SERMON VIII.

taken by our Saviour of his Request.

But besides this sufficient Reason drawn from the Majesty of God, for which we may suppose in general, that as Men are not fit Judges when Miracles are necessary, so neither is it at all consistent either with their Duty to prescribe to God, or with his own Greatness and Glory to be directed by them in the doing them: There is a

Second Reason, for which more particularly with respect to the Design of our Saviour in coming into the World, and to the Time and Place in which this Action of his was done, we may conclude, that he thought it not convenient to perform a Miracle upon the Jews requiring him to shew by what Authority he acted.

Our Saviour's principal Design in coming in the Flesh was, after having

SERMON VIII. 171

ving for some Time instructed Man-kind more perfectly in the Will of God, to suffer Death for the Sins of the World; and therefore we may be sure he would not do any thing that might be an Hindrance to this his Intention. For this Reason we may conclude, that tho' he had in the Course of his Life in the Flesh performed many Works that were truly miraculous, and such as rendered all that were Witnesses of them altogether inexcusable for their not believing in him; yet that when the Time drew near, and his Hour was now come, in which this great Work was to be done, he would not think it proper to exert himself any longer after this Manner. It was still in his Power, as he himself declares, *Mat. xxvi. 53.* to work Miracles, and to have had even the Powers of Heaven under his Direction; he could have defeated the

172 SERMON VIII

Designs of those that had resolved
 upon his Death, and withstood
 their Force with *Legions of Angels*;
 but, to use his own Words, *How*
then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled,
that thus it must be? How should
 he then have accomplished the Pro-
 phecies concerning him, and have
 performed the Work which he had
 undertaken, and purposely came into
 the World to do. Had our Saviour
 at the Demand of the Jews wrought
 any miraculous Work, and left them
 without any Pretence to doubt of
 his Divine Authority, it would ra-
 ther, humanly speaking, have hin-
 dred, than furthered and promoted
 the End he aimed at. The Place,
 where this was required of him,
 was the Temple; the Time, a little
 before the Passover; and thereupon
 had he complied with their De-
 mand, the Miracle must have been
 performed in the most publick Place,
 and

SERMON VIII. 173

and probably in the greatest Concourse of People of all Sorts that the Jewish Nation was capable of affording. How then, to repeat our Saviour's Words, *Luke xxiv. 46.* if he had done thus, could the Scriptures have been fulfilled, which had long before declared, that *it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third Day?* Can we think that any Men could shut their Eyes so closely, as not to see such bright Rays of the Divinity, or be so stupidly and audaciously rebellious against God, as to violate and do Despight to the Person of one who produced such authentick Credentials of his Character and Authority from him?

That the Jews were wicked, perverse, and very much blinded with Prejudice and Error, is evident enough from their Usage of our Saviour, after the many wonderful
Works

174 SERMON VIII.

Works which he had done, and they had heard of and seen ; after their having heard his excellent Instructions, and been Witnesses of his exemplary Innocence and Holiness. But, unless with their Goodness they had divested themselves of their Faculties of Reason, we cannot imagine, that when they demanded a Miracle, if he had immediately performed one, they could have any longer delayed to acknowledge his Divine Authority, or have persevered in their malicious Designs against him. For this Reason therefore may we believe, that our Saviour refused to comply with the Demand of the Jews so fully as they desired, because it would have no way promoted, but rather have obstructed the Accomplishment of that, which he principally designed to effect by his coming into the World. A

Third

SERMON VIII. 175

Third Reason of our Saviour's proceeding in this Manner may be, because he knew how to give them in a little Time sufficient and convincing Proof of the Right he had to reform the Church, and that in such a Manner as should be no way inconsistent with the great End he had proposed to himself; I mean by referring them to his Resurrection.

This he made choice of as the principal Evidence, which he would use to convince the World of his Divine Authority. Thus in the Words of my Text, when the Jews had demanded a Sign of him, he doth not absolutely refuse them, but only refers them to the future, to the Destruction and raising again of *the Temple of his Body*: He declines gratifying their Curiosity, but he provides for the Conviction of their Judgments, and Information of
their

176 SERMON VIII.

their Understandings, when the appointed Time for that Purpose should come. Thus at another Time, when certain of the Scribes and Pharisees had a mind, as they expressed themselves, *Mat. xii. 38.* to see a Sign from him, he answered and said unto them, *an evil and adulterous Generation seeketh after a Sign, and there shall no Sign be given to it, but the Sign of the Prophet Jonas. For as Jonas was three Days and three Nights in the Whale's Belly, so shall the Son of Man be three Days and three Nights in the Heart of the Earth.* Our Saviour therefore, I say, seems from among all his wonderful and miraculous Works to have selected his Resurrection, as that by which he would convince the World of his Divine Authority, and of his being the *Messiah*, who was so earnestly expected. And this of all other was the most proper
Proof

SERMON VIII. 177

Proof that could be given; such a one, as beyond all Dispute proved what he designed it should, and took away all possible Ground of Doubt concerning him. For whether Men desired to know, that Jesus was the *Messiah*, or that he was God, or that he was Man, the three Things upon the Knowledge of which all our Faith in him, and Hopes of Salvation through him are founded, they might be fully satisfied by his Resurrection.

First, His Resurrection proved him to be the *Messiah*; because by it he verified the Types and Prophecies in the Old Testament concerning him, and also his own Prophecies to that Purpose in the New. Thus it was that *Jonas* was a Type of him: Thus did he fulfil the Prophecy of *David* at *Psa. xvi.* 10. that God would not suffer his Holy One to see Corruption: And thus

178 SERMON VIII.

was fulfilled his own often repeated Prediction, which, (to omit many other Places) we find, *Mat. xvi. 21.* *that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the Elders and Chief Priests and Scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third Day.*

Secondly, The Resurrection of Christ proves him to be God. For as Life is the peculiar Gift of God, and he only hath the bestowing of it; so by ascribing the Power of giving this to our Saviour, the Scripture ascribes to him the Power of the Divinity. And for this Reason the raising and restoring the dead Body of Christ to Life, which our Saviour in my Text and other Places declares to be done by his own Powers, is also very frequently said to be done immediately by Almighty God.

Thirdly, The Resurrection of our Saviour shews, that he was Man.

SERMON VIII. 179

For as this implies his human Nature by the Mortality of his Body, which except it had died, could not have been raised from the Dead; so doth it prove him to have been really Man, and Partaker of our Nature.

On these Truths and the Knowledge of them, as I before observed, doth our Faith in Christ, and our Hope of Salvation by him depend. For as the Prophecies in Scripture have ascertained the Person who was to redeem Mankind, by describing several Circumstances of him; it was necessary, in order to our being very thoroughly assured that Jesus Christ was that Person, that all those Circumstances should concur in him. It was necessary that we should be satisfied by his Resurrection, that he was the *Holy One of God, who should not see Corruption*; It was necessary that we should

180 SERMON VIII.

know he was Man, that we might be assured he could represent our Nature, and suffer in it for the Sins of the World; and it was necessary that we should know him to be God, that we might have no Room of doubting, whether his Merits and the Atonement which he made were of sufficient Value to satisfy for the Sins of the World, or not. So firm a Foundation doth the Resurrection of our Saviour lay for the Faith of his Followers, and so irresistibly doth it confute not only the Jews, and all others who deny him to be the true *Messiah*; but also all such as have entertained Heretical Opinions concerning his Nature, whether those that by denying his Divinity do take away the Value and Merits of his sufferings, or those that by denying his Humanity do take away the Possibility of them.

bloud of his death washes away all
world

a. a. A.

I

SERMON VIII. 181

I shall now very briefly infer something from what hath been said, and so conclude. And

First, Since it doth appear, that the certain Knowledge of our Saviour's Resurrection is of so much Moment and Importance to us, as that it both teaches us what we are to believe of Him, and firmly strengthens and secures that Belief, and effectually quickens it by a Practice agreeable to it, the most easy and natural Inference we can make from hence is, that we ought constantly to give our most unfeigned Thanks to God for communicating to us this Knowledge: But in a more especial Manner is this Duty incumbent upon us at this Time, which is appointed for the solemn Celebration of our Blessed Lord's victorious Return from his Conquest over the Powers of Hell and Death, and thereby opening to his Followers

182 SERMON VIII.

ers the Gate of everlasting Life. How great a Sense the Church hath always had of the Blessings, which we are entitled to by our Saviour's Resurrection, we may collect from hence, that whereas for other extraordinary Occasions of Thanksgiving it hath been the Practice to set apart some one particular Day or Season in the Year to commemorate them upon, for this there is not only a particular Time appointed and observed with the greatest Preparation of all others once in the Year, but in every Week a Day is reserved for this Purpose, in which we may celebrate our Christian Sabbath, being the Day on which our Lord compleated the New Creation, and rested from the Labours of it.

We may further from hence infer, that it is our bounden Duty to rise from the Death of Sin, *that like as Christ was raised up from the dead*
by

SERMON VIII 483

by the Glory of the Father, even so
 we also should walk in Newness of
 Life. Rom. vi. 4. That if we be ri-
 sen with Christ, we should seek those
 things which are above, where Christ
 sitteth on the Right Hand of God.
 Col. iii. 1. Our Desires ought to be
 no longer fixed upon the Things of
 this World, since the best and most
 deserving Object of them is after
 his glorious Resurrection from the
 Grave ascended to another. It is
 thither that we must strive to rise,
 by freeing ourselves from every thing
 that may hinder us in our Attempt.
 The alluring Pleasures, the empty
 Honours and Voluptuous Cares of this
 Life are so many Weights that keep
 us down, and confine us to this
 Earth; and till we can get our Li-
 berty from the Dominion of these,
 it will be impossible for us to raise
 ourselves any nearer to Heaven.
 Nor is there any Way but one to
 effect

184 SERMON VIII.

effect this: And what that is, we shall find, 1 *John*, v. 4. where we are told, that *the Victory which overcometh the World is Faith*. This teaches us to free our Desires from the Enjoyments of this Life, by representing to us infinitely greater in another. Let us lift up our Hearts to these, and make it our principal Endeavour to attain to them; in order to which, as we know that Jesus by his Resurrection is the true Christ, and *that Man who is ordained to judge the World in Righteousness*, let us learn to become his obedient Servants; and in Expectation of his Second Coming, let us, and that now, address ourselves to a timely and sincere Repentance and Amendment of Life; that when at last the Day which God hath appointed shall come, he that raised up Christ from the Dead may also again quicken our dead Bodies, and raise them up to everlasting Life. SER-

Gospels, and in this first Chapter of



SERMON IX.

Preached on Ascension-Day.

Matthew. 28. 1. We have the Man.

Acts. 1. 9. We have what a-

And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up, and a Cloud received him out of their Sight.

His Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ being one of the most remarkable Passages of his History, the Particulars of it are carefully recorded in the
Vol. II. B b Gospels,

186 SERMON IX.

Gospels, and in this first Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles ; and the Church hath appointed this Day for our more especial Consideration and Commemoration of it. In the Words before us,

I. *First*, We are taught what it was which our Lord was doing immediately before his Ascension.

II. *Secondly*, We have the Manner of his Ascension described.

III. *Thirdly*, We have what amounts to a sufficient Proof of the Certainty of his Ascension.

I. *First*, We are taught what it was which our Lord was doing immediately before his Ascension.

He was speaking to them the Things mentioned in the foregoing Verses, and referred to in this: We there find, as that our Lord shewed himself alive after his Passion by many

SERMON IX. 887

my infallible Proofs, being seen of his
Apostles forty Days, and speaking
of the Things pertaining to the
Kingdom of God; so especially, that
when he purposed to leave conver-
sion visibly and personally among
Men, and to ascend to his Father,
he was assembled together with them:
He ordered the Matter so, as that
they should all be present at the gi-
ving of his last Instructions and
Commands; and what these were,
it will not be thought improper to
consider.
It seems all that they had hither-
to seen and heard and known of
him, and of the Intent of his Co-
ming, and of the Nature of his
Kingdom, had not removed that
Prejudice, with which the Disciples
and the rest of their Countreymen
were possessed concerning the Re-
stitution of a Temporal Kingdom
to the Nation of the Jews. Their
them
selfish

188 SERMON IX

selfish Minds had not Capacity enough to entertain any Apprehensions of the universal Benefit which was to accrue to Mankind in general by the Means of their *Messiah*, and therefore instead of asking at that important Moment for any Directions how to demean themselves in their Ministry, or enquiring after the best Methods of successfully discharging their Office, and bringing Men to the Belief and Knowledge of the Truth, we find them going on in their old Mistake, and desiring to know, as we are told in the 6th Verse, whether he would at that Time *restore the Kingdom to Israel*. In Answer to this, he reproveth their Curiosity, and gives them to understand, that, however highly they might think of themselves upon their having been admitted to so free a Conversation with him, and whatever Discoveries he had made to them

SERMON IX 189

them of the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, yet it did not belong to them to be so inquisitive; it was not for them to know the Times or the Seasons which the Father had put in his own Power, which he had reserved the Knowledge of entirely to himself, without thinking good to communicate it to them. Having thus taken off their Thoughts from what they had no Authority to busy them about, and which it would have been no Advantage to them to have known, he speaks to them of what more nearly concerned them, of the Office he had entrusted them with the Discharge of, and of the Assistance he would give them to enable them to go through with it. Thus he tells them at the 8th Verse, Ye shall receive Power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be Witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria

190 SERMON IX

Samaria, and unto the uttermost Part of the Earth. *John xvi. 7.* I shall not here stand to enquire in what Manner this that our Saviour told them was fulfilled, nor is it necessary at present to be particular in giving an Account of the Apostles faithful Discharge of the Trust which their Great Master committed to them, by boldly witnessing his Truths, even in the Place where so lately they had seen him put to Death for so doing, and diligently and laboriously spreading his Doctrine over all the World. I shall rather observe to you the great Tenderness and Compassion of our Lord to his Followers in his thus taking Leave of them. He had before told them, that upon the bare Mention of his going away, Sorrow had filled their Heart. *John xvi. 6.* With what Eyes then must we imagine that they could behold him taken indeed

SERMON IX. 191

indeed from them; if he had not so kindly prepared them for that parting, by assuring them that it was expedient for them, that he should go away; that it would be for their Advantage that he should go to his Father! He, as often as he told them any thing that might cause them to fear or to grieve, was careful at the same Time to supply them with Encouragement, and to promise them Comfort. Thus for Instance, *Mat. v. 12*, where he intimates to them that Men would revile them and persecute them, and speak all manner of Evil against them falsely for his sake, he at the same Time gives them to understand, that they should be blessed, and have Reason to rejoice and be exceeding glad for it; that thereby they should be put upon the same Level with the Prophets who had been used thus before them: So likewise

192 SERMON IX

wife when in *Mat. x.* 18. he tells
 them what Troubles they must un-
 dergo, and how they shall be brought
 before *Governors and Kings* for his
 sake, he requirés them not to be
 concerned in the least at it, to take
 no Thought how or what they shall
 speak in their own Defence; and en-
 courages them not to fear them,
 whose Power reaches no further than
 to kill the Body. And with the same
 tender Sentiments it is, that as often
 as he forewarns his Followers of his
 Departure, he tells them of a Com-
 forter, that he would send, who
 should supply his Place with them,
 and support them more effectually
 than it is possible for us to conceive,
 how even he himself, were he to
 have continued in the World, could
 have done. For tho' he could be
 present with them all, and that con-
 stantly, while the Number of them
 was so small, and they so free and
 disen-

SERMON IX. 193

disengaged from the World, as to be at Leisure to attend him where ever he went, yet when his Gospel should be preached over all the Earth, and innumerable Multitudes in the widely distant Quarters of the World should be brought to the Belief of it, it was then expedient and necessary, that *the Comforter, who is the Spirit of Truth*, should become their Instructor, since it was impossible for any one Man to discharge that Office in Person every where and at the same Time, except with the Romanists we can imagine that his individual Body could be infinitely multiplied to supply the manifold Occasions of his People, or that an human Body was capable of being omnipresent, as well as the infinite Spirit of God is so in its own Nature. But our Lord, who by bearing our Nature himself had a very quick and cer-

Vol. II. C c tain

194 SERMON IX.

tain Feeling and Knowledge of its Infirmities and Necessities, did much sooner than just at the Time of his going out of the World provide for the Comfort and Good of all his true Servants and Members of his Mystical Body, by requiring and in a *New Commandment* making it the Duty of them all to be Comforters to one another.

That Sympathy which Nature hath spread through all Mankind, and by which no one can avoid compassionating the Misery of any one of his own Kind, unless he hath first divested himself of one of the best Proofs of his Humanity, did not to our Saviour appear strong enough of itself to overcome the sordid Avarice and Fondness for Wealth, which Men for the most part are so much possessed by, that tho' they see with Uneasiness the Wants of others, and cannot hear
 II their

SERMON IX. 195

their Cries without Pain and Regret, yet they cannot give themselves and others Ease by parting with something for the Relief of their Necessities. He therefore added the Force of Duty to the Bent and Inclination of Nature, and hath made it a *New Commandment* that Men should *love one another*. And of all the Commands which he gave, one should think this to be the least opposed to Men's Desires, and that it would meet with the readiest and most unconstrained Obedience from them; since, besides the Reasonableness of the Thing itself, that all God's Creatures should be allowed the Benefit of his Gifts, and that no Man should look upon himself as privileged to refuse that Relief to others, which he knows them to stand in Need of, and himself in a Condition to afford; besides the Obedience which is rendered

196 SERMON IX.

to God thereby, and that Gratitude to him requires it; the doing of it is a Kindness even to ourselves: And in this one Point we obey at once the Will of God, and the Desire of our Nature, Things that are not often consistent with each other; we do, which may seem a Paradox, by an Act of Charity fulfil at once the Motions of the Spirit and of the Flesh.

Thus it was that our Lord Jesus provided for the Comfort and Encouragement of his Disciples. He introduced a new Obligation of Love to dispose them to become helpful to one another: And this he chose to urge to them frequently during the Time of his Continuance with them, and did not postpone it, as too many do their good Deeds, to the Hour of his Departure: He, like those who best know how to join their Charity with Prudence, gave

SERMON IX. 197

gave them that excellent Commandment at a Time when he could in Person observe their Practice of it, and instruct them in the Nature of it, and amend the Mistakes they might make concerning it. And when he was *to leave the World and go to the Father*, when his Followers were to be deprived of his Presence, and were like to be overwhelmed with Grief for his Departure, he commiserated their Condition, and would not leave them *comfortless*. He promised them that in a few Days they should *be baptized with the Holy Ghost*, and that they should *receive Power* from on high. And indeed it well appeared by their different Behaviour before and after they had received the Holy Ghost, how effectually he proved a Support and Comforter to them. For whereas before that, when the Disciples assembled themselves together after
their

128 SERMON IX.

their Master's Death, they did it as covertly and privately as they could *for Fear of the Jews*, John xx. 19. having with him lost all their Courage and Spirit; we find that, as soon as they had received the Holy Ghost after his Ascension, they openly and boldly proclaimed in the Temple, the Synagogues, and to the Faces of their Rulers, the Gospel of their Master; and underwent not only with Courage, but with Joy and Triumph, and with Thanks to God, the Shame they were put to for his Name's Sake.

Having given some Account of what our Lord did before his Ascension, I proceed,

II. *Secondly*, To consider the Account here given of the Manner of his Ascension. We are told that *he was taken up, and a Cloud received him out of their Sight*, And in the

11th

SERMON IX. 199

11th Verse of this Chapter, the Angels tell the Apostles, that he was *taken up from them into Heaven*. By which we may understand, that the Place to which our Lord is ascended, is the Place which is more especially the Residence of the Divine Glory, which is the eternal Seat of Happiness, and which in the most distinguished Manner shines with the Light of God's Presence. It is that Place, which is the Kingdom to which he invites his Subjects to follow him; that *Jerusalem which is above*, in which he prepares *Mansions* for such as pursue the Way that leads to it, and in which they are allowed the Rights of Citizenship.

That there is such a Place in Reality, and not in Notion only, is sufficiently put beyond Question by our Lord's Ascension thither. For he carried a Body with him that must be in some Place, and that
 fled girl. such

200 SERMON IX.

such a one as our Bodies will be capable of being and subsisting in, when he shall have changed them, that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious Body.

Very excellent Things they are, which are spoken of this City of God. The inspired Eloquence, of Holy Scripture doth not attempt to describe adequately the Courts of Heaven, nor can the Tongues of Angels so represent the Joys and Glory of them, as to make us have Thoughts of them answerable to their Greatness. But that we may not want some Notions of them, which if not just, are however the nearest the being of of any that our Capacities are large enough to make Room for, we may find all Things that are distinguished by their Lustre, by their Excellence of any Sort, by their Beauty, or by their Conduciveness to Happiness, all Things that are of the highest

SERMON IX. 201

highest Value and greatest Perfection upon Earth, assembled and drawn together to give us some feint Representation of the incomparably superior Glory and Felicity of Heaven.

That nothing may be wanting to make the Happiness of Heaven and its Glory perfect, it hath pleased God that, how highly soever we may raise our Expectations while we endeavour after them, we shall find them still infinitely exceeding them, when we come to the Enjoyment of them. I need not observe then, how much they differ from all the Enjoyments of this World, which in the Possession hardly ever fail of falling short of what we had promised ourselves from them in Hope and Imagination. This indeed is our own Fault, and that we are still disappointed in our Expectation, is not so much because the Pleasures

202 SERMON IX.

of this World are empty and short-lived in themselves, as because when we have expected more Satisfaction and Delight from them than they are capable of yielding, a Vexation of Spirit attends the Disappointment, which destroys the Pleasure we otherwise might have met with, had our Imaginations been but equal to what we find in Reality, and makes it all Vanity, and of no Entertainment to us.

Into this Happiness and Glory was our Lord received up, when he *was taken up into Heaven*; and advanced not to an ordinary and common Rank or Degree in it, but to the Right Hand of God, to the Throne of that Kingdom far above all the most excellent and exalted Orders of Angels, there to resume his original Sovereignty and Divine Majesty, and to reign to all Eternity. This is an Ascent which we cannot

SERMON IX. 203

cannot reach ; but the more we tread of those Steps in which he went thither, the nearer we shall come to it : The more we imitate his Goodness of every Sort, the more we follow his exemplary Obedience to the Will of God, his Zeal and incessant Industry in promoting his Honour, his unbounded and active Charity in instructing the Ignorant, relieving the Wants of those who were in any kind of Need whether Bodily or Spiritual, comforting the Afflicted, bearing patiently the Failings and Infirmities of those he conversed with, and doing Good to all, *even to the unthankful and to the evil* ; the higher we shall be admitted in that happy State, the brighter will be our Crown, and we shall be great even in a distinguished Manner in the Kingdom of Heaven itself.

This is what I have thought fit to be observed in the second Place from

204 SERMON IX

the Account given of our Saviour's Ascension. It remains for me,

III. *Thirdly*, To observe what amounts in the Text to a sufficient Proof of the Certainty of our Lord's Ascension. We are told therein, that *he was taken up, while they beheld*, and in the next Verse, that *they looked stedfastly toward Heaven, as he went up*. And of this they were all Witnesses: And it is to be hoped, that considering the Knowledge they had of the Person, the Number of the Evidence, and the little Reason or Inducement they could have to deceive others with a false Account of it, they may be allowed to be competent, sufficient and satisfactory Witnesses. But lest any Question should be made, whether the Disciples, tho' they knew he was *taken up*, could be as sure that he was taken up to Heaven, a
more

SERMON IX. 205

more authentick and irrefragable Proof is provided ; and the Testimony of Angels is added to that of Men in the 11th Verse of this Chapter : For by these the Apostles were told, as he would in some Time come again, so to what Place he was then gone, and where he would continue till such his Coming. *Ye Men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into Heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come, in like manner as ye have seen him go into Heaven.*

I shall not at present set myself to reckon up the many Uses which may be made of the Knowledge of our Lord's Ascension into Heaven ; some few I shall briefly mention, and so conclude.

First, From hence we may be taught whither to direct the Prayers and Adorations we would offer to Him. It is not at all necessary in order

206 SERMON IX.

order to the doing of this, that we should with some undertake a tedious Pilgrimage in Hopes of being nearer to him in one Place, than we are in another: Since all Places in Earth are equally distant from Heaven, whither we are assured he is gone, and where he remains. Nor yet must Men hope to see that real Body in a Procession, or imagine that they pay any acceptable Respect to it, while they prostrate themselves to a Piece of Bread: For his Body hath been long since received out of human Sight, and now dwells in the Light which no Man hath seen, nor with mortal Eyes can see.

Secondly, As we must not look for it upon Earth with some, so neither with others must we deny the Body of Christ to be in Heaven. To refuse to acknowledge any other Christ than what Men have within them,

SERMON IX. 207

them, is what can be the Effect of nothing but the most delusive and absurd Enthusiasm, and what is inconsistent with the Account here given; for as the Apostles had, to use the Words of the 3d Verse of this Chapter, *many infallible Proofs* of the Restoration of his Body to Life, so were they as well assured, that *this same Jesus*, whom they had known, and not an Illusion or Phantom in his Likeness, was *taken up from them into Heaven*.

Lastly, From this Knowledge we may come to a Satisfaction with respect to the Business he there employs himself in, which is that of making Intercession and gaining Gifts for Men. We do with more assured Hope and Chearfulness look up to Heaven, and with the greater Boldness present ourselves before the Throne of God, while we know that we have so acceptable a Mediator

208 SERMON IX.

tor to further our Petitions, and obtain favourable Answers to them. To Him therefore let us constantly look up in all our Necessities, and expect the best Returns from so tender and compassionate a Master: Let us endeavour to obey him, and he will be ready to assist us, 'till having brought us through a World, of which he in his State of Humiliation more than any other experienced the Miseries, He exalt us to that Bliss and Glory to which by his Ascension he hath opened the Way, and in which he will continue us to all Eternity.



SER



SERMON X.

Preached on Trinity-Sunday.



I Cor. xi. 14.

*But the Natural Man receiveth not
the Things of the Spirit of God:
for they are Foolishness unto him;
neither can he know them, because
they are Spiritually discerned.*



T. Paul in this Epistle to
the *Corinthians* gives them
to understand, how unac-
ceptable the Account of their Divi-

210 SERMON X.

sions was to him, which, as we find in the 11th Verse of the First Chapter, had been transmitted to him from some among themselves. And in the following Verses he intimates that their Contentions were to be ascribed to the Self-conceit of those, who, not having their Understandings enlightened and directed by the Holy Ghost, had taken upon themselves to examine into and to determine of the Mysteries of Divine Wisdom, only by the Strength of human Reason. And this the Apostle assigns not only as a probable, but as a necessary Cause of Difference and Dissensions among them. For if in Things which lie most exposed to our Enquiries, we can be so ready to entertain various Opinions, that it is rare to find Men of the same Mind with others altogether in any thing, and not unusual to find the same Man at different Times

SERMON IX. 211

Times differing from himself, how much more certainly will Contentions arise, when Men shall strive to exact from others a Compliance and Likeness of Opinion in Things that are equally above the Reach, and exceeding the Comprehension of them all. For that the mysterious Doctrines of revealed Religion are so, the Apostle doth very expressly assert in the Words of my Text, in which he assures us, not only that *the Natural Man receiveth not*, but also further, that he *cannot know the Things of the Spirit of God*. That we may be sufficiently instructed in the Meaning, and convinced of the Truth of that which is here told us, I shall enquire,

I. *First*, What is meant by the *Natural Man*.

II. *Secondly*, What *the Things of the Spirit* are.

212 SERMON X.

III. *Thirdly*, I shall examine the Reasons assigned in the Text, for which *the Natural Man* doth not, cannot receive or know the Things of the Spirit of God.

I. *First*, I am to enquire what is meant in the Text by the *Natural Man*. And from this Enquiry it will appear, that by this Expression is not intended one, who never having had any Advantage of Education or any Information from others, or been directed to any Method of employing his Thoughts, or provided with Rules for the better Use and Improvement of his Reason; hath no more Knowledge than his own Senses and Reflexions are able to discover and furnish him with. The *Natural Man* is he that is destitute not of the Help of Learning, but of the Spirit of God; He who hath no higher Principle of his Acti-

SERMON X. 213

ons, nor any clearer Light to direct his Belief than that of meer natural and human Reason, and who having no other Rule to judge by, pronounces of the Truth or Falshood of every thing according as he can make it agree with that or the contrary. So that we may find those to stand first in the List of the Apostle's *Natural* Men, whom one would least imagine to be chargeable with Want of Capacity and Apprehension: The Philosophers and Professors of Wisdom, the Men of improved Knowledge and enlarged Understandings, the Searchers after Science, and the Contrivers of Rules and Methods of discovering Truth, and separating it from Error. Not that, as some ignorant Enthusiasts have imagined, the Holy Ghost and Improvements in human Learning are so incompatible, as that one of them must always be wanting, where

214 SERMON X.

where there is any Measure of the other : This could not be the Meaning of *St. Paul*, who was himself a Proof to the contrary, and was so eminently endowed with Assistance both from Heaven, and from the Stores of Earthly Knowledge. But for those who set the highest Value upon the latter of these Helps, who think themselves by its Aid sufficiently qualified for the discovering and discerning of all Truth; and who, persuaded in their Minds of the Perfection of their own Reason, and the Extent of their own Capacity, are resolved to believe nothing to be true which they have not a full Understanding of, and to pronounce every thing to be false which exceeds their Comprehension; for these, I say, whatever their Accomplishments may be in Human Wisdom, they are not so much as Novices in Divine, they are altogether

Stran-

SERMON X. 215

Strangers to and unacquainted with it, and therefore of all Men the most incompetent Judges of it: Of all Men, I say; for they are less likely to be brought to a new Sort of Learning, and to become Beginners in a new Sort of Knowledge, who are puffed up with Thoughts of their past Attainments, and the Progress they have made, and the great Name they bear for Learning already, than those who never having their Minds prepossessed, or before been used to hold and defend Notions of a different Nature, have neither so strong a Prejudice, nor so obstinate a Pride to hinder them from becoming new Beginners and Disciples in the Study of Divine Knowledge. Accordingly, with regard to the Choice our Lord made of those whom he would make his Scholars, and institute in the Learning which He was the Author of,
and

216 SERMON X.

and to the Entertainment which that Learning afterwards met with in the World, and the Qualifications of those, who most readily and universally give themselves up to be taught and to be instructed in it, we find that this Observation held good; we see that, as the Apostle expresses this Meaning, *1 Cor. i. 26, &c. Not many Wise Men after the Flesh, not many Mighty, not many Noble were called:* But Men of the contrary Characters, the Ignorant, the Weak, and the Despised were made Choice of for the attaining this Knowledge, which God knew them to be the least prejudiced against, and therefore the most susceptible and capable of. For how improbable soever the Assertion may at first seem, it is a certain Truth, that the Progress a Man hath made in Knowledge may disable, or at least very much hinder him from
 impro-

SERMON X. 217

improving himself, or apprehending the Truth and Intent of what he hears in the Case I am speaking of, and his Excellency in one Study may make him the more unready and backward in another: When a Man hath been used to search for Truth in a particular Method, and to judge of it by a particular Rule, he cannot but be very much at a Loss, and with the greatest Difficulty be brought to understand and believe as true, Things which are to be examined in another Way, and which his former Skill cannot furnish him with any sufficient Criterion to judge of by. And this is the Case with relation to Divine and Human Knowledge: They are entirely distinct, and differ as much as Heaven and Earth; they are neither to be judged of by the same Rule, nor enquired after by the same Method, nor to be received with the same

218 SERMON X.

Sort of Belief, nor to be pursued and endeavoured after with the same Designs and Intentions. A Man therefore may be, tho' there is no Necessity that he must be, a good Proficient in one of these Sorts of Knowledge, and at the same time as ignorant and uninstructed in the other: He may have gained an extraordinary Measure of Natural Knowledge, and be, as far as any Man is, a very competent and sufficient Judge of it, and yet know nothing of *the Things of the Spirit of God*, and be altogether unable to entertain right Notions of them.

What Things these latter are, I now propose to shew in the

II. *Second Place.*

And Interpreters are very unanimous in understanding these to be those Mysterious Truths, which, except they had been revealed to them

SERMON X. 219

by the Spirit of God, Men could never have come to have entertained any Thoughts, or to have had any sort of Knowledge of.

Religion, so far as it gives us any Account of the Nature of God, must necessarily have Truths of this Sort in it: For as all that it teaches us of a Spirit, and of that which is infinite, is both beyond our Discovery and above our Comprehension, it must follow, that it is revealed to us by some other than our own Reason, and that it must be a Mystery to us. I shall not pretend to reckon up all the Things, which the Apostle in this Expression may be thought to understand and to have respect to: It may be sufficient to say, that from the foregoing Context it is evident he means those Doctrines of Christianity, which human Reason is not a competent Judge of, those Truths which could neither be discovered

220 SERMON X.

nor comprehended by it. And from among these, on this Day especially, it will be most proper to chuse the wonderful Doctrine of the Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Divine Nature to be considered.

That this is one of *the Things of the Spirit of God* will very easily be proved: For as it is evident from Holy Scripture that there are three distinct Persons there spoken of, to each of which the incommunicable Attributes of the Godhead are ascribed, and as it is in so many Places, and with so much Emphasis declared, that *there is but one God*, it follows by a plain and necessary Consequence, that the Doctrine of the Trinity, as professed by the Church, is contained in the Holy Scripture, and is revealed to us *by the Spirit of God*. I shall name one Text out of many, which will, if well considered and compared with other Texts, make

SERMON X. 221

make this Matter clear enough to satisfy us of the Truth of it : And that is in *John* xiv. 16, 17. *I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever ; even the Spirit of Truth whom the World cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him.* In these Words there are certainly three distinct Persons mentioned ; the *Son* who makes the Prayer here spoken of, the *Father*, to whom that Prayer is directed, and *the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth* (a distinct Person still from the Son, who accordingly styles him *another Comforter*) whom *the Father* upon that Prayer would send into the World. It is easy to produce Texts of Scripture in which the most acknowledged Works and incommunicable Attributes of the Deity, such as the Creation and Government of the World, and in order

222 SERMON X.

der to these infinite Power, Omnis-
 science and Omnipresence are ex-
 pressly, and without Reserve or Li-
 mitation, ascribed to each of these
 Persons singly: But this is a Way
 of Proof which would require more
 Time than can now be spent in it.
 And it is the less necessary, because
 the Holy Scripture doth not only
 thus, by ascribing to each of them
 these Attributes of the Deity, impli-
 citly declare each of them to be
 God: But doth also expressly ap-
 ply the Name and Title of God to
 every one of them. In the First
 Chapter of the Epistle to the *Gala-*
tians, at the first Verse, *St. Paul*
calls himself an Apostle by Jesus
Christ and God the Father: In the
 3d Chapter of the First Epistle to
Timothy, at the 6th Verse, the Son
 is called *God, manifest in the Flesh*:
 And in the 5th Chapter of the *Acts*
of the Apostles, at the 14th Verse,
 105 *Ananias*

SERMON X. 223

Ananias who, as it is expressly said in the 3d Verse, had *lied unto the Holy Ghost*, is told by *St. Peter*, *Tbou hast not lied unto Men, but unto God*. This therefore is one of the *Things of the Spirit of God*; for it is expressly revealed in Holy Scripture by him: Nor doth it want another Argument to prove it so, I mean that contained in the Text, namely, that the *Natural Man doth not receive it*; it is what they who are guided by their own Presumption, and refuse to believe or hearken to the Words of the Spirit of God, *cannot know*, cannot have right Notions of, or avoid Errors or Mistakes in. The Reasons for which this will be so, I am now to give an Account of, which I shall endeavour to do in the

III. *Third Place*: And these are two.

First,

224 SERMON X.

First, He cannot receive the *Things of the Spirit*, who is altogether guided by Natural Reason only, because they are *Foolishness* to him. And,

Secondly, He cannot by his Reason make a right Judgment of them, because they are *Spiritually discerned*.

First, He cannot receive the *Things of the Spirit*, for they are *Foolishness* to him. And yet no further back than the 7th Verse of this Chapter, these very Things are called the *Wisdom of God in a Mystery*, even the *hidden Wisdom* which God ordained before the World unto his Glory. So different are Human Wisdom and Divine! And so true it is, that, as we find in the First Chapter of this Epistle, at the 20th Verse, God hath made foolish the *Wisdom of this World*; of which there can need
no

SERMON X. 225

no further Proof, after it said that the Wisdom of God is *Foolishness unto it*. It seems that Men enquiring into this mysterious and incomprehensible Doctrine meet with Difficulties which shock their Reason, and which they cannot by the Help of their own Abilities surmount or reconcile. They therefore (rather than they will, as they might without any great Condescension do, own any Imperfection in themselves, or Want of sufficient Strength of Reason to judge of all Truths by) chuse to charge the Doctrine itself, however plainly by the Scripture asserted, with Absurdities, Contradictions and Impossibilities, and it is *Foolishness* to them, because they will not submit their Belief to the Authority it is delivered by, nor have they Power of themselves to comprehend the Truth and Nature of it.

226 SERMON X.

In a Place very like to this of my Text, and already referred to, in *John* xiv. 17. it is said, that the World (which means the same there, that the *Natural Man* in my Text doth) *cannot receive the Spirit of Truth, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him.* And this will sufficiently inform us, how good at Reasoning those great Masters are, who think themselves wise enough to charge even God and the Spirit of Wisdom with Folly. He that argues against the Belief of the Being of a God, or of human Souls being distinct from Bodies, hath at the Bottom no better Argument to proceed upon, than that wretched one assigned him in the Verse I last read: He cannot believe there are any Spiritual Substances, because he hath not *seen* them; not considering, that if he could see them, they would not be Spiritual Substances, since
Nothing

SERMON X. 227

nothing but what is Bodily can be the Object of our Sight. So likewise he that reasons (if it may be so called) against the Belief of the Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Divine Nature; against the Union of the Divine and Human Nature in the Person of our Saviour, or any other Mysterious Article of the Christian Faith, gives this for his Reason, that he hath not *known* them; that is, according to the more modern Phrase, that he can form no Notion, no Idea of those Things, that he cannot comprehend how they can be true, and therefore he thinks it for the Honour of his Reason not to submit to the Belief of them.

Such and so strong is the Wisdom of this World, while it attempts to judge of Things above its Reach: as if because a Man doth not know how a Thing can be true, it there-

against

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fore

228 SERMON X.

fore follows that it must be false :
 As if his Ignorance of one Thing
 proves his Knowledge of another ;
 and as if because he doth not know
 what the Nature of God is, he
 should therefore know what is in-
 consistent with it. It should seem
 more agreeable to Reason to say,
 that since we cannot comprehend
 the Nature of God, we ought rather
 to rely upon and believe the Ac-
 count which He himself hath given
 of it, than to trust to our own im-
 perfect Reason in enquiring after it.
 We cannot comprehend how Three
 Persons can be One God ; but we
 can with Ease comprehend this
 Proposition, that God is true, and
 that therefore we ought to believe
 all that He tells us, whether we can
 comprehend it or not.

I have enquired into the first Rea-
 son, given in my Text, for which
 the *Natural Man* receiveth not the
 Things

SERMON X. 229

Things of the Spirit of God, which is, because they are Foolishness unto him; and I have endeavoured to shew on which Side the Want of Wisdom is most chargeable. I proceed now to give an Account of the Second Reason assigned for this, namely, he cannot know them, because they are Spiritually discerned.

By this Expression is intended in Effect; that a Man, while he makes use of and depends altogether upon his own Reason in considering these Things, uses an improper and incompetent Medium; and will as certainly find them misrepresented to him, will as surely entertain a wrong Opinion of them, as he will do of any thing in Nature, who never saw it but through a false Glass, nor ever heard any true Account of it.

Nor doth this Expression only amount to thus much, that such a
one

230 SERMON X.

one is liable to be mistaken on Account of the wrong Representations which his Reason will make of these Things; but they also teach us, that the Man thus qualified is altogether incapacitated to understand the Truth of them, tho' it be declared to him: He hath no Principles of Knowledge with which they will agree, or by which he can examine them without rejecting them: He is in the Condition of him, who, blind from his Mother's Womb, hears others talk of the Beauty resulting from agreeable Mixtures of Colours; he hears them talk of what is really true, but is not able to form to himself any the least just Notion and Apprehension of what they mean.

We are not therefore to wonder, that this and the like Mysterious Doctrines, which are only made known to us in a double Sense by the

SERMON IX 231

the Spirit of God, as he reveals them to us, and as by his Grace he makes us able to apprehend the Truth of them; we are not, I say, to wonder, that they appear so differently to different Men; and that besides those, that are unanimous in the right Belief of them, there should be so many, who either believe them amiss and after a wrong Manner, or do not believe them at all. The Things themselves are *the Things of the Spirit of God*, and can only be *Spiritually discerned*: The Holy Ghost, whose Revelation brings them to our Knowledge, is he only who can give us any right Understanding and Belief of them.

We might indeed, as we do, find Proofs in the Scripture of this Truth enough to over-rule and silence the Gain saying of our Reason, and the Objections which it would raise against it: But 'till the Holy Ghost had

232 SERMON X2

had illuminated our Minds, and enabled us by his Power to discern and to judge rightly of it, we should not be able to advance to Persuasion and to Faith.

Let us then be taught to pray to God for the Aid of his Grace, that we may believe rightly and as we ought to do concerning him; and he will enable us to receive and to adore the Mysteries, which as yet we cannot comprehend: He will teach us to direct our Petitions to the Father, through the Intercession of the Son, for the Gifts and Graces of the Holy Ghost, and when he sees good, will enlarge our Capacities in Heaven, and make himself known to us, even as we are known.

Proofs in the Scripture of this Truth enough to over-rule and silence the Gainsaying of our Reason, and the SER



SERMON XI.

Preached at an Ordination.



1 Thess. iv. 8.

*He therefore that despiseth, despiseth
not Man, but God who hath also
given unto us his Holy Spirit.*

THE Apostle having in the
first Verse of this Chapter
besought and exhorted the
Christians to whom he had address-
ed this Epistle, and that in the
Name of Jesus Christ, that they

234 SERMON XI.

would *walk*, or lead their Lives, according to those *Commandments*, which, as he tells them in the 2d Verse, he *gave them by the Lord Jesus*; and having put them in mind of some Particulars of the *Will of God*, their observing of which would conduce to their *Sanctification and Honour*; He adds to his own Authority and Request, another and more cogent Consideration to dispose them to be directed and persuaded by him; which is, that their Contempt of and Disobedience to the Precepts which he delivered to them, was despising God rather than Man; because what is thus despised was, tho' delivered to them by Men, the Will of God, which he by *his Holy Spirit* had communicated to them, and commanded them to communicate to others.

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The

SERMON XI. 235

The Business of the following Discourse will be to deduce and establish this Truth, as being founded upon, and by a natural Consequence to be drawn from my Text; namely, That the Contempt Men shew of what the Ministers of God, agreeably to his Word, deliver to them as their Duty, is a Contempt of God himself. For the better apprehending of which I shall,

I. *First*, Give an Account of the Meaning of the Word which in my Text is rendred *Despise*.

II. *Secondly*, I shall enquire what it is which is here said to be Despised.

III. *Thirdly*, I shall shew that the Despising here intended is Despising God, as it is called in my Text.

Hh 2

I. *First*,

226 SERMON XI

I. *First*, I am to give an Account of the Meaning of the Word which in my Text is rendred *Despise*.

The original Word is used in several Senses in the New Testament, and translated into different Words from this in other Places. The most strict and Grammatical Construction of it we meet with, *Luke vii. 30.* where we are told of the Pharisees and Lawyers, that they *rejected the Counsel of God against themselves*; where the Word which is translated *Rejected* is the same which is here interpreted *Despise*. And in this Sense this Word is used, *John xii. 48.* where our Saviour saith, *He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my Words, bath one that judgeth him.* A second Use of this Word is, where it is made to signify the Disannulling, Abrogating or making void any thing. Thus, *Gal. ii. 21.* the Apostle saith, *I do not frustrate the*

SERMON XL 237

the Grace of God; and iii. 15. speaking of human Contracts after they are confirmed, he saith, that *no Man dissolveth or addeth thereto.* Another Sense of this Word we find, 1 Tim. 5. 12. where those Widows are spoken of, who *have cast off their first Faith*: Which relates to their forsaking the Station they had in the Service of the Church, which by marrying again they apostatized from, and not to any Breach of Faith to their former Husbands, their Obligations to them having been dissolved by Death. And in this Place it is used to signify their quitting and forsaking a Sacred for a Secular Employment. Besides these Senses, it is used in my Text, and in other Places, to mean *Despising*; or at least the Translators of the Holy Books both into our own and other Languages, have thought they had Reason to render it so.

Thus

238 SERMON XL

Thus, *Luke* x. 16. in the same Sense and to the same Purpose with my Text, our Lord tells his Disciples, whom he was then authorizing and sending to preach his Gospel: *He that beareth you, beareth me: And he that despiseth you, despiseth me: And he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me;* that is in other Words, he that despiseth the Messengers of Christ, *despiseth not Man, but God.* So, *Heb.* x. 28. *he that despised Moses's Law died without Mercy.* And in the General Epistle of St. *Jude* at the 8th Verse, Mention is made, and that in a very severe Manner, of such as *despise Dominion.* And in these Places which I have last quoted, the Word is one in the Original, and in the Translation the same with that in my Text. Should we enquire for a Reason, why this Word, which is used to other Purposes in other Places,

SERMON XI. 239

Places, is in these thus translated, it would not perhaps be very easy to find it; since neither in the Nature and Importance of the Matters which our Lord Jesus and his Apostles delivered to the World, nor in the Proofs they produced of their Authority to deliver them, was there any thing so absurd, or trifling, or despicable, as might justly render them the Subjects of Scorn and Contempt. If we may be allowed to offer a Conjecture, we might suppose the Reason of this to have been, because there were in those Days as well as these, such as thought good to use a Method, which a late Author hath been pleased to think a very just one, of trying the Worth and Value of Things of a Religious Nature; namely, that of ridiculing them, and, by observing whether they are capable of being represented as ridiculous, to judge whether

240 SERMON XL

whether they are not really so of and in themselves.

This Rule, how good or bad soever it be, hath we find been applied, and with what Success, they will do well to consider, who are desirous to have it still made use of. Thus after *Pilate* by a serious Examination of our Saviour, as we read, *Luke xxiii. 3, 4* had found *no Fault* in him, and could not by the violent and tumultuous Prosecution of him by the Chiefs of the Jewish Nation attended by a clamorous and headstrong Multitude, be readily prevailed upon, to pronounce an unjust Condemnation of him; the other Way was tried, and *Herod* by a Mock Ceremony, and, as he thought, misapplied Emblems of Royalty and Majesty, exposed him to Scorn, and made him ridiculous to the undiscerning People; in consequence of which, had they

SERMON XI. 241

they before had any Esteem left for him, it is very probable this would have taken it away; nor would his Innocence have been any longer a sufficient Protection to him, while he thus stood the Subject not only of publick Malice, but of publick Contempt, and appeared to be condemned by reason of the one, and not worth saving because of the other. We may, if we please, be taught by this Example, that such a Way of making Trial of the Worth of Things is a very dangerous one; since by it we may much more probably laugh ourselves and others out of, than into the Belief of the most sacred and momentous Truths, and bring ourselves to think they are ridiculous, by trying whether they are so or not. And indeed there needs no long Consideration to teach us to say with *Solomon* of this Sort of *Laughter*, that *it is mad*, Ec-
 Vol. II. I i cles.

242 SERMON XI.

cles. ii. 2. since it is so contrary to Reason to treat any thing as ridiculous before we know it to be so, only as a Way to discover whether it be so or not: Especially Things of such a Nature, as cannot be despised, without at the same time despising God himself. And this will bring me to enquire what those Things are, after I have briefly observed, that the several Senses, into which the Word I am now treating of is rendred, are no way inconsistent one with another, nor do they in the least make its true Meaning dubious. For whether Men reject the Truths of the Gospel by refusing to believe them, or whether they proceed further, not only to disbelieve them, but to sit *in the Seat of the scornful*, and to make them the Subjects of their Mirth and Laughter, they do, as far as concerns themselves and their own Salvation,

SERMON XI. 243

vation, *cast off their first Faith*, into which they were baptized, *disannul and frustrate, and make void the Grace of God* towards them. Their Scurrility and profane scoffing at what belongs to God, devolves upon him; and in Return there will come a Time, when he *also will laugh at their Calamity, and mock when their Fear cometh*, Prov. i. 26.

What those Things are, by despising which Men despise God, is what we are to enquire after in the

II. *Second Place.*

In the foregoing Context in the first Verse of this Chapter, the Apostle puts them in mind to whom he wrote, of Rules which they had received from him, by which they should *walk and please God*: In the 2d Verse he tells them, *Ye know, what Commandments we gave you by*

244 SERMON XI.

the Lord Jesus, that is, by his Authority: And in the 3d Verse he tells them, that what he had delivered to them is *the Will of God*. These Commandments therefore we may understand to be the Things, by despising which Men do *despise God*. But in the Text it is said, *He that despiseth, despiseth not Man, but God*: Which implies, that they who do thus are in a Mistake; and that tho' they really despise God, they think they only despise Men. Nor need we be at a Loss to know, what Men they are, whom they think they despise, since no other can here be meant but those, by whom the Will of God is declared to them. The Manner of the Apostle's Speech determines this. For he having before spoken of his having by the Lord Jesus given Commandments to them, he uses the Words of my Text as an Argument for their observing

SERMON XI. 245

-serving those Commandments, because their slighting them would not so properly be a despising of him who delivered them, as a despising of God from whom he had received them.

I proceed now to shew,

III. *Thirdly*, That the Despising here intended is, as it is called in the Text, Despising God.

It doth not require much Labour to prove this: For as the Things which are despised are his Will and his Ministers, the Contempt of them as they are such, must be looked upon as offered to Him. Thus in Temporal Government, the Breach of the Law is an Offence against and Contempt of the Sovereign, whose declared Will it is: And accordingly the Inquisition and Punishment are ordered in the Sovereign's Name, tho' the Injury never reached

246 SERMON XI.

reached his Person. And thus the Indignities offered to such as bear about them the Character and represent the Person of the Prince, or act by his Authority, is resented, and Reparation exacted as severely, as if the Affront were put upon the Prince in Person. The Case is parallel to that of my Text, as far as any thing upon Earth is capable of being so. *St. Paul* as a Minister authorized by God, declared to Men that which he knew and assured them was *his Will*: And certainly, while he thus bore the Character of a Minister of God, and delivered Commands to Men from him, no one could reject or despise him, but at the same time they must despise him that sent him. And that which is thus asserted by *St. Paul* with regard to himself, may be said of all the Ministers of God, who have received Authority as they ought to

do

SERMON XI. 247

do to preach his Word, that they who, out of Contempt to their Persons, or for any other Reason, reject their Doctrine, tho' agreeable to the Word of God, or put it to no other or better Use than that of making it the Subject of scornful and profane Mirth and Ridicule; they who give themselves the Liberty to use Men ill, and to treat them with Rudeness and Spight, before they know any more of them than that they are the Ministers of God, excepting which they can have no other Cause to use them worse than others; they who do thus (and it would be well if the Number of them were not so great as it is) while they think they only despise Men, and such Men as they have good Reason to believe they may safely be more bold with than with others, do (it must be wished unwittingly) despise God, whom, however his

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248 SERMON XI

Long-suffering may at the present bear with them, they will find a God jealous of his Glory, and armed with Power to assert his own Honour, and to punish such, as fail of the Regard which they ought to have for it.

It may be objected to what hath been just now said; that the Case is very different between despising an Apostle, as St. *Paul* was, one who received immediately from God the Commands which he delivered to Men, and by Miracles and Signs of an extraordinary Power assisting him, proved the Divine Authority of his Mission: And despising such as assume the Stile of God's Ministers, without being able to give the same Proofs of their being so, which he did. But in Answer to this, besides that the greatest Number of those, from whom they find bad Treatment, are such as do not
look

SERMON XI. 249

look so far, or ever think of questioning the Validity of their Pretensions, but derive their Ill-Will to them from their inculcating and vindicating such Truths as they are not willing to hear and obey; besides this, I say, the Difference between St. *Paul* and others, who are duly authorized to preach the Word of God now, is not in this Particular so great, as some may imagine. St. *Paul* here acts as an ordinary Minister, rather than as an Apostle: He doth not here preach the Word to those who before knew it not; but he applies it to the Use and Instruction of those who were already acquainted with it, and in the 2d Verse of this Chapter appeals to their own Knowledge, that what he told them was *the Will of God*. And to do thus is the proper Business of every Minister of God, whose Office ordinarily is, not so

- Vol. II. K k much

250 SERMON XI.

much to proclaim the Tidings of the Gospel to those who never before heard them, which in a Christian Nation it would be impossible to do; but to call upon Men to live according to that Knowledge which they have of their Duty, and from the sufficient Stores of the Holy Scripture to direct and confirm their Faith, and to draw Arguments for the quickening of their Practice, and making it answerable to and worthy of their Profession; *to put them always in Remembrance of these Things, tho' they know them, and be established in the present Truth.* 2 Pet. i. 12.

St. Paul in the Discharge of this Sort of Ministry, declares in the Text, that *he who despises, despises not him, but God*: And there can be no Reason assigned, for which they who discharge the same Office should not be guarded in it by the same

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SERMON XI. 251

Declaration of God's accounting the Despight done to them in the Discharge and upon the Account of their Function to be done to Himself. If it be said, that this Office is not peculiar to any Sort or Number of Christians, but common to all, every Christian being bound in Duty to God, and Charity to Man, to do what he can for the persuading of others to live in Obedience to the Will of God; and that to reject their Admonitions of this Sort is to reject God, whose Word their Admonitions are taken from; it will be readily acknowledged, that this is in great measure true: But yet it will not follow, that this is not more peculiarly the Business and Duty of some, than of others. God hath been pleased to account the Business of instructing Men in Religion of more Importance, than to leave it no better provided for, than

252 SERMON XI.

it would be, were it so general a Concern, as not more especially to belong to, and to be the chief Employment of some in particular whom he commits it to, and from whom he will exact a strict Account of their Performance of it. Nor will this be ever found to be an unnecessary and superfluous Provision, 'till such as plead for the contrary, and would take the Performance of the Worship of God in Publick, the Administration of his Sacraments, and the Instruction of his People, out of the Hands of his Ministers, by giving an equal Right to all Christians as well as to them to do those Things, will be willing to own it to be their Duty to do all these Things, as well as to pretend it is their Right: Which neither can they avoid the doing of, a Christian as such having no Right to do any thing, which at the same time it is not his Duty to do.

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SERMON XL 253

It will further appear, that it is necessary, that it should be the proper Business of some particular Men rather than of others to do these Things, if we turn our Thoughts from the Sacred to Civil Offices. It is certainly the Duty of every Man to keep himself and, as far as he is able, others also within the Rules of Justice, and in Obedience to the Laws of his Country: But doth this Duty of all Men supersede the Necessity of having the Care of this vested in particular Men as their proper Business? Or rather is it not evident, that except the Sword of Justice was put into the Hands of those, who by a more than ordinary Measure of Sagacity and Integrity are qualified so to bear it, as that it may not strike in vain, the Majesty of Laws would soon be lost; and Confusion and Anarchy would deform the World, and banish Security

254 SERMON XL

rity and Peace from among Men, were there no stronger Ties upon their Actions, than those are, which their own Apprehensions of their Duty, and of the Regard they ought to have to Justice, would lay upon them.

To remedy such Inconveniencies both in Religious and Civil Society, God hath been pleased to commit Authority to particular Persons, and to make it their Office to employ themselves in bringing Men to the Performance of their Duty, and containing them within the Limits of it.

As for what may be said in Derogation from the Authority of the Ordinations of those who are now appointed to serve in the Ministry of the Church, of the Insignificance of the Ceremonies used in admitting them, and of the Ceasing of that extraordinary Communica-
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SERMON XI. 255

tion of the Holy Ghost to those who are now Ordained, it is all fallacious Argument. For allowing, as all must, the first Ordinations to have been given by Divine Authority, and accompanied with the Holy Ghost, it will, in order to prove that the present Orders are void and destitute of those Qualifications, be necessary to assign the Time when Almighty God put an End to and revoked that Authority he had before imparted, when he no longer empowered the Guides of his Church to send others, as He had sent them, and when the giving so extraordinary a Measure of the Holy Ghost, as the then extraordinary Exigences of the Church did require, did so entirely cease, as that He did not still continue to impart his Assistance to those, who were dedicated to his Service, so far as he knew they stood in need of it, for the due Discharge
of

256 SERMON XL

of their Office. For to argue, that there are no Ministers of Divine Appointment now, because we have no extraordinary and in these Times superfluous Proofs of their Authority, is as inconclusive, as it would be to argue, that neither are there any Christians in the World now, because the extraordinary miraculous Assistances, which the first Christians had, are no longer to be expected or found among them.

As for those Ceremonies which, on these Days of Ordination, are used in admitting Men to Sacred Offices, however insignificant they may seem now, they were accounted of more Importance in an Age, when these Things were better understood, I mean in that of the Apostles themselves; for otherwise, what Reason can be given, why after St. Paul had been immediately called by our Lord from Heaven,
after

SERMON XI. 257

after he had been endued with the Holy Ghost, and instructed in the Business he was appointed to, it was still thought necessary and required expressly by the Holy Ghost, that he should enter upon the Work he had been called to, in the ordinary Way, as we find, *Acts* xiii. 2, 3. and be admitted to it by the *laying on of Hands*, having first been prepared for that by *Fasting and Prayer*. If these Things, I say, were ever unnecessary; surely they must have been so then! But God who is the Author of Order, was pleased to require it then; and it is sufficient Reason for the Continuance and Necessity of it, that it is done in Imitation of and Conformity to so good and safe an Example.

I hope what hath been said may amount to a Proof, that the Ministry of the Christian Church is the Ministry of God; the Consequence

258 SERMON XL

of which will be, that the rejecting its Ministers and their Doctrine, is *despising* not only *Men*, but *God*, who hath given unto them his Spirit, his Authority to undertake that Office, and his Assistance to enable them to discharge it. And what hath been said may be allowed to be but too necessary for the Days we live in, when Men are so ready to despise the Ministers of Christ. Some of their Reasons for so doing, we need not be at a Loss to produce. When Men are fond of Pleasures, is it not natural for them to dislike those, who by representing the Unlawfulness of them do put a Check to and interrupt the Enjoyment of them? When Men grow so opinionated and sufficient, as to think that their Knowledge and Comprehension is so great, that nothing lies beyond the Compass and Reach of them, must it not create in them, if

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SERMON XI. 259

not an Hatred, a Contempt of such, as hold and maintain Things for true, which they can form no Notions of, and which put them upon a Necessity of either accounting others to be void of Judgment, or themselves ? But it is with the Truths which God reveals, as it is with some of his *Works* ; they are such as *Despisers* may wonder at and *perish*, because they *will not believe, tho' a Man declare them unto them.* Acts xiii. 41. They may pretend to find Absurdities and Contradictions in them ; but all this while, 'till they can find a Way to remove them out of Holy Scripture, it is but *fighting against God.* For as the Word which declares those Truths is his, his Honour is engaged in the Defence of them : And they who reject those Truths, or for the sake of them, the Ministers of God who are bound to maintain them, how-

260 SERMON XI.

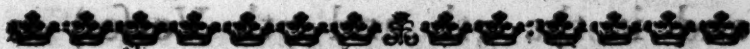
ever facetiously they may now rally
and divert themselves about them,
will at last to their everlasting Con-
fusion find, that they have been *De-
spisers not only of Men, but of God,*



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SERMON XII.



Psalm xxxviii. 3.

*There is no Soundness in my Flesh,
because of thine Anger: Neither
is there any Rest in my Bones, be-
cause of my Sin.*

WE may collect from the
Whole of this Psalm, that
the Holy *David*, when he
composed it, was under very great,
and grievous Afflictions. And, from
several

262 SERMON XII.

several Particulars of this Psalm, we may find of what Kinds his Sufferings were; and with what sufficient Reason he poured out his Complaints to God, under the Pressure of them; and so earnestly prayed to him, to deliver him from them.

His first Complaint is, of the miserable Condition his *Body* was in.

This he describes (in my Text, and in the 5th and 7th Verses) as labouring under a painful and loathsome Disease; as being feeble, and sore broken; and as having no Soundness in it. Such extreme Sufferings, tho' they take their Rise from the Body only, are bitter enough to fill the Mouth of him who bears them with Complaints; and to exercise, if not to wear out, and exhaust his Patience and Fortitude; to make him go mourning all the Day long, under a Burthen too heavy for him to bear.

To

SERMON XII. 263

To this broken and painful State of *Body*, was added Trouble and Disquiet of *Mind*; while the Psalmist, as we find, apprehended himself to be under the Displeasure of Almighty God; and that the Sufferings he underwent, were inflicted upon him as Punishments for his Wickedness.

Thus, in the 3d Verse, he applies his Prayer to God, *There is no Soundness in my Flesh, because of thine Anger; neither is there any Rest in my Bones, because of my Sin;* (and in the 4th and 5th Verses) *Mine Iniquities are gone over my Head;— My Wounds stink, and are corrupt, through my Foolishness,*

Thus do we see the Holy *David* representing himself as in the utmost Distress, and Anguish of both *Body* and *Soul*; and yet, not to have expressed the Whole of his Complaints.

His

264 SERMON XII.

His Condition, and Circumstance, with respect to other Men, was very afflicting and dangerous; and to the Grief of his Mind, and the Torture of his Body, the Danger and Distress of his Estate were added, in order to the rendering his Misery full, and utterly insupportable.

At the 11th Verse he complains, that he was forsaken by his Friends, and his Kinsmen: These (instead of assisting, or administering any Comfort or Help to him) kept at a Distance, stood aloof, afar off from him.

But, tho' he was thus abandoned by his Friends, he was not neglected, or given over by his Enemies; These did not cease to persecute and insult him, to endanger, and to endeavour to destroy him: As we find in the 12th Verse.

SERMON XII 265

And as his Ability to defend himself against them grew less, and the Number of his Friends decreased; so, at the same Time, the Powers, and Numbers of his Enemies were multiplied; as we find in the 19th Verse. *They that seek after my Life, lay Snares for me. Mine Enemies are lively and strong; and they that hate me wrongfully, are increased in Number.*

From what hath been said, with regard to the Condition, in which David was, when he wrote this Psalm, we may justly conclude, that it is scarce possible to conceive how any Man could be in more grievous, and insupportable Calamity, than he laboured under; or could, with greater Cause, cry out unto God, (as in the 2d Verse of this Psalm) *Thine Arrows stick fast in me, and thy Hand presseth me sore.* We can scarce (I say) imagine,
 Vol. II. M m how

266 SERMON XII.

how any Man can be more afflicted, than *David* here represents himself to have been, when his Body was tortured, and disabled with painful, and noisome Diseases ; his Mind overwhelmed with Trouble, from a Sense of his Sins, and of the Anger of God provoked by them ; and (under all this Extremity of Anguish) himself at once deserted, and forsaken by his nearest Friends ; and persecuted and insulted by his Enemies.

I shall employ the Remainder of this Discourse, in considering, after what Manner the Holy Psalmist behaved himself, under the Pressure of his Troubles : And in making such Inferences from what shall have been said, as may be of useful Importance to us.

I. *First*, I shall consider, in what Manner the Holy *David* behaved

SERMON XII. 267

ved himself under the heavy Burthen of the manifold Afflictions, which lay upon him.

And (in the *First Place*) we find him ascribing his Sufferings to their true Cause; namely, To the Will, and Appointment of Almighty God; it was *His Hand*, as we find in the 2d Verse of this Psalm, that *pressed David so sore*; and they were *His Arrows*, that *stuck so fast in him*.

God is the Disposer of all Things that befall us: He at first brought us out of nothing; He continues us in Being; and every Condition and Circumstance of our Life is the Effect of his Over-ruling Pleasure. *He maketh Poor, and maketh Rich; He bringeth down to the Grave, and bringeth up; For the Pillars of the Earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the World upon them.* 1 Sam. ii.

6, &c.

268 SERMON XII.

This was what the Holy *David* well considered; and therefore (very differently from the Generality of Mankind) instead of perplexing, and bewildering himself in seeking after other, and wrong Causes of his Troubles; (in his own hard Fortune, suppose, or in the bad Constitution of his Body, or Temper of his Mind, or in the Malice, or Craftiness of other Men) He acknowledges the Hand of God, and his Power, in his sufferings; and resolves all Doubts concerning them, into his Appointment, and Providence.

Nor doth he stop here; but, with the Power of God, He also acknowledges his Justice; and confesseth, that (tho' God had greatly afflicted him) He had not done it without good Cause.

Accordingly, (through this Psalm, and in many other) where he speaks at any time of his Afflictions, he,
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SERMON XII. 269

for the most Part in the same Breath, confesseth his Sins, his Iniquities, or (as with still more Self-Condempnation he often chuses to stile it) his Foolishness.

Sin and Wickedness of every Kind is, in its own Nature, contrary to the Perfect Holiness of God, who is of Purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity, without shewing effectually, in the Punishment of it, that he utterly disalloweth, and condemneth it.

Nor is it only contrary to his Holiness, but it is (as being the Transgression of his Law) Disobedience to him; Want of due Regard to his Greatness, and to his undoubted Sovereignty over us, and therefore to be justly punished in us, who are his Subjects, and hold all that we have, and even our very Being, by his Grant, and Bounty.

But,

270 SERMON XII.

But, however inexcusable in itself, and offensive to God, the Sin of Mankind may be, yet, through the Frailty, and corrupt Tendency of Fallen Nature, it is so General, and Universal, that, out of all the innumerable Sons of Men, One alone (and he was the Son of God also) hath been able to keep himself wholly, and altogether free from the Stain, and Guilt of it.

Even the Holy, the Inspired *David*, The Man after God's own Heart, and so Eminently approved as his Servant, and distinguished by his Favour, as we here find, by his often repeated Confession of it; was overwhelmed with it; *His Iniquities were gone over his Head, and were like a sore Burthen, too heavy for him to bear.*

The best of Men therefore (when they consider themselves as *David* did) will, with him, acknowledge the

SERMON XII. 271

the Justice of God, in all the Sufferings which they undergo ; and will confess that God is righteous in all that he doth, and that *Just are his Judgments.*

But further, the Sense of God's Power and Justice, (which considered separately, and without any Regard to the other Attributes of God, would fill the Soul with Terrours, and [too probably] sink it into absolute Despair) did not extinguish the Faith of *David*, or deprive him of his Hope in God's Mercies.

He (as we read in the 15th, 21st, and 22d Verses) *still hoped in God* ; and prayed to him, *not to forsake him, not to be far from him*, but that he would *make Haste to help him* ; as being *his Salvation*, the Lord, from whom he hoped for Forgiveness, and Deliverance.

The Assurance of this was his Support under all his Sorrows, and rendered

272 SERMON XII

rendered his Behaviour under them so proper, and consistent; He acknowledged that, as a Sinner, he justly suffered under the Hand of God; but he considered God, not only as a Just, but as a Merciful God; his Apprehensions of the first of these Attributes did not take away, or destroy his Trust, and Confidence in the latter; He (as he tells us in the 18th Verse) declared his Iniquity, and was sorry for (that is) he repented of his Sin; which had brought the Anger of God, and his own sufferings upon him, as we read in my Text; but (as we find in the 15th, and the two last Verses of the Psalm) He did all this with Hope in God's Mercy; and with Prayer to him for Pardon of his Sins, and Deliverance from his Afflictions.

In what hath been hitherto said, it hath been my Endeavour to give some Account of the Condition, in
which

SERMON XII. 273

which *David* was, when he wrote the Psalm my Text is Part of; and of his Behaviour in that Condition: And, in what remains to be said, I propose to make such Inferences from the Whole, as may be of Use to us. We find how great, and bitter Troubles *David* was exercised with; and from thence may be taught to consider, what may too possibly be our own Lots. Our Bodies are as obnoxious to acute Pains, to loathsome Diseases, and to Weakness; and utter Feebleness, as his was: The most beautiful Face may by these be deformed, and rendered shocking to the Sight; the strongest Nerves unstrung, and left altogether disabled, and useless; and the soundest, healthiest Constitution broken, corrupted, and over-run with Disorder, and Distemper. Our Mind likewise, and Peace of Soul is equal-

Vol. II. N n ly

274 SERMON XII

ly subject to be oppressed, and sunk with Sorrow, Fear, and Terrour; nor, surely, can we think, that our Sins do less, than those of *David*, deserve, that God should inflict these, and even infinitely greater Judgments upon us, for them.

If our Gracious Lord is pleased to preserve us from such Sufferings, as he might justly for our Sins punish us with, it is our Duty to offer up continually our abundant Praises to him, for his so great Long-suffering and Mercy; and to be led by them to a timely and sincere Repentance of our Sins, and Amendment of our Lives.

But if (with *David*) we are chastised of God, and made by him to taste the bitter Cup of his Anger for our Iniquities; Let us be taught, by the useful Example of that excellent and holy Person, what it will behove us to do; and what our properest

SERMON XII. 275

properest Behaviour will be, in such afflicting Circumstances. Let us, like him, (in order to the removing the Effects of God's Displeasure against us) diligently search after, and humbly confess to him the Sins we have been guilty of against him; Let us acknowledge his Justice in our sufferings, and place our whole Hopes of being delivered from them, in his alone free, and, on our Part, undeserved Mercy: And, let this Hope still support us under all our Sorrows, and Afflictions, whether of Estate, or of Body, or of Soul; whether our Condition is impaired, or endangered; whether our Friends forsake us, or are taken from us; whether our Bodies are afflicted with Pains and Sickness, or our Souls with Sorrow and Trouble; Let (I say) our Hope in God's Mercies which are over all his Works, still support us, and never be departed from

276 SERMON XII

by us, for it is fixed upon a Foundation, which never can fail; even upon Jesus Christ, in whom, notwithstanding our Iniquities, we are intitled to Forgiveness, are reconciled unto God, have our Sins washed out of his Remembrance, and our eternal Inheritance of his Kingdom purchased, by the precious Blood which he hath shed for us.

This Hope of the Mercy, and regained Love of God, by the Mediation of a Saviour, hath been the unshaken Support of the Servants of God, through all Ages. The Promise of this Saviour, and Faith in that Promise, (as we find through the whole Eleventh Chapter of the Epistle to the *Hebrews*) enabled the Saints of God, before the Coming of our Lord Jesus in the Flesh, to bear Afflictions of every Kind, which they (beyond others) were exercised with; To leave their Na-
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SERMON XII 277

tive Country; to part from their nearest, and dearest Relations; and voluntarily to become *Strangers, and Pilgrims in the Earth*; to bear the Loss of all Things; even of Life itself (through the most exquisite Torments) when it could not be preserved, without departing from this Faith.

But if the Promise, and distant Prospect of a Saviour, could have so much Power and Influence, and could so strongly support under all Afflictions, those who died without receiving it; How much more must the Performance, the Accomplishment, and Possession of that Promise, enable those who have received it, to adhere to it, and to make their Way, through all Kinds of Sorrows and Sufferings, to the End of it, in the Happiness and Glory, which it places in their View.

Thus

278 SERMON XII

Thus may we be taught, where to find Support under all Afflictions, how grievous soever for the present, by *looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith, who was himself a Man of Sorrows*, but who nevertheless made his Way victoriously through all his Sufferings, and is now set down at the Right Hand of God; Is our Body weakened with Sickness, racked with Pain, or deformed and corrupted? He hath assured us, that *he will change it, and make it like unto his Glorious Body*; and will raise it again to Immortality, and Incorruption.

Is our Soul afflicted with the Sense of our Sins, and with Fears of God's Anger and Vengeance, and are we heavy loaden with this afflicting Burthen? He calls us to come unto him, and promises to give us Rest; He affords Peace to our Souls, in the Assurance he gives
us

SERMON XII. 279

us of the Pardon of our Sins thro' his Blood, and of our being (thro' his Merits, and Intercession on our Behalf) restored to the Love, and Favour of God, and effectually reconciled to him.

Are we in Trouble on Account of our outward Condition, and Circumstances in the World? Do we feel, or fear the Inconveniencies of Want; the Power, and Malice of Enemies; the Neglect, or Loss of Friends; or any thing else that can be Matter of Trouble, or Vexation, and Impatience to us? We may be taught, by Illustrious Examples of Great and Good Men who have gone before us, (such as are laid before us in my Text, and other Places of Holy Scripture) not to faint, or to be weary under any of these Trials; much less to look upon ourselves as being forsaken, or hated of God; while we find that the best
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280 SERMON XII

of Men, and those whom God hath in a most distinguished Manner honoured with his Love, have been thus chastened, and corrected by him; and have, by much Tribulation, been weaned and disengaged from this World, before they have been allowed to enter into the Rest, and Kingdom of God in a better

Secondly and lastly. After having thus found Comfort for ourselves, and Confirmation for our Faith in God, under all the Afflictions we may meet with in this World, from the Examples of those blessed Saints of God, who, in all Ages of the World, have been under the same Trials of Sorrows, it will become us to learn, and to exercise Charity towards other Men, from the same Consideration.

Known unto God himself, and to him alone, are his Works, and the
Reasons,

SERMON XII 281

Reasons, and final Views of them ; but, to us, his *Judgments are unsearchable, his Ways are past finding out*; and it is Presumption of a very unwarrantable Kind in us, to undertake to assign the precise Rules, and particular Reasons of his Dealings with particular Men.

The Holy *David*, and our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ, in their Sufferings, were accounted of Men to be forsaken of God, and utterly abandoned by him : But those who judged thus, were not only very unjust, and uncharitable, but very much mistaken, in their concluding thus of them.

Let not us then take upon us, from the Condition of Men in outward Appearance, to make any Conjecture, or pass any Censure concerning their Spiritual Estate, or their being in the Favour, or under the Displeasure of Almighty God.

282 SERMON XII.

This is too unsettled, and fallacious a Principle, for any certain and warrantable Conclusions to be drawn from it ; and (if we give ourselves Liberty to take our Measures of God's Love, or Anger to his Creatures, from outward, and present Appearances) we shall hardly escape Error, and making very wrong Conclusions ; shall (too probably) account those to be great Sinners, and under the Displeasure of God, whom he accounts his dearest Children ; whom he is at present correcting for their Transgressions, that they may be amended thereby, and delivered from future, and more grievous Punishment ; and fitted, by these (comparatively) *light Afflictions, which are but for a Moment, for a far more exceeding, and eternal Weight of Glory.*

To
 This
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 Vol. II.

SERMON XII. 283

To conclude.

Let us, from the Whole that hath been said on this Subject, learn a Knowledge, very necessary for all that are travelling through a Vale of Tears, I mean, The Knowing how to bear, and to make the best Use of those manifold Troubles and Afflictions, which so abundantly lie in their Way ; and which they must expect, and may be sure to meet with.

Let us, in every Circumstance of the Kind I am speaking of, set before us, and endeavour to imitate, the Example of the Holy *David* ; and, of a Greater than he was, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us seek the Cause of every Trouble we are afflicted with, in our Sins, and in the Justice, and Will of God ; and let us, in order to our being relieved from our Sorrows, endeavour to Amend ourselves,

and

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and

284 SERMON XII.

and to obtain of God Forgiveness,
and Deliverance.

To this End, Let us be encouraged by Faith, and assured Hopes of his Mercy, to apply ourselves to him in earnest Prayer, with full Assurance of our being heard, and (in his due Time) comforted, supported, and freed from our Afflictions by him.

And having thus endeavoured to confirm, and to establish our own Peace, Trust, and Confidence in God's Mercies, and Loving-Kindnesses to his Creatures; Let us Charitably strive to assist, and encourage such of our Brethren, as we see labouring under the like, or, it may be, greater Burthens.

Let us not, from their Sufferings, uncharitably go about to censure them as greater Sinners than others; but let us well remember, that the best of Men in God's Esteem, have
often

SERMON XII. '285

often been the greatest Sufferers, and accounted (of all Men) most miserable, by the rest of Mankind.

Let us rather help them to bear their Burthens, by assisting them to the utmost of our Powers ; and (where those are insufficient) by joining our Prayers to theirs, that God would mercifully support them under their Afflictions ; and (when he sees it most for their Good) would deliver them out of them ; and at length bring us, together with them, into the Place of his own uninterrupted, and eternal Rest, and Peace, into which no Grief, or Sorrow can have any Entrance, but where our Lord God *shall wipe away all Tears from off all Faces for ever.*

To this may God of his infinite Mercy bring us all, for the Sake of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen,

SER-

often been the greatest sufferers, and
accounted (of all Men) most mis-
erable, by the rest of Mankind.
Let us rather help them to bear
their Burdens, by assisting them in
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rupted, and eternal Rest, and Peace,
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have any Entrance, but where our
Lord God shall wipe away all Tears
from off all Faces for ever.
To this may God of his infinite
Mercy bring us all, for the sake of
his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

SER-



SERMON XIII.



Luke xvi. 31.

And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.



WHETHER this be a real History, or a Parable, which is concluded by the Words of my Text, it is the same Thing to us, who are concerned only in the instructive

288 SERMON XIII.

instructive Part of it. For if it be a true History, the Matter of Fact no way relates to, or concerns us, only as it serves for our Admonition : Or if it be a Parable, our Saviour, when he spake it, intended that we should give Attention and Obedience to the Doctrines and Precepts that are expressly contained in it, or that may rationally be deduced from it.

The Importance of the Truths which are by our Saviour delivered to us in this Place, is so great, and the Knowledge of them so necessary, that the most serious Consideration of them, is what we may frequently employ our Thoughts upon to the greatest Advantage.

We may learn from the Representation that is here made of the different Conditions, of a rich voluptuous Man, indulging himself in sensual Pleasures ; and of one in the

SERMON XIII. 289

the worst Circumstances of human Life as to outward Appearance; oppressed with inward Sicknefs, and covered with Sores, in Want of Necessaries, and disabled from any Means of getting them; we may, I say, learn from the Account here given of these different Conditions, and of the Change made in them in another World, from what they had been in this; That God, in his Judgment of the Value of Men, is determined by Reasons very different from those which Men go by. Any one who should have look'd on and compared two Persons in the Condition which these are represented in, would have preferred not only the Circumstances, but the Person also of the Rich Man to that of the other: He would have reckoned him, in the common Phrase, worth more than him that wanted Necessaries, and thought a greater Pro-

290 SERMON XIII.

portion of Esteem his Due. Whereas we find, when they stood before the Throne of God, a very different Account was there made of them. The Riches of the one, and the Poverty of the other were left behind them in the Grave, and therefore could no longer make any Distinction between them: The only Remainder of what they had before been possess'd of, and which therefore was all that could make any Difference in their Value, was the Goodness and Virtue of the one, and the Wickedness and Sins of the other; and by these they were, and shall for ever be distinguish'd, and one of them shall always be as much above the other, as Heaven is above Hell; not because the one had before been rich, and the other poor; but because the one had been wicked, and made ill Use of his good Things; and the other, under all the

SERMON XIII. 291

the Temptations of Want and Affliction, had preserved his Integrity, and a Good Conscience.

Those who consider this will be taught, That if they desire to exalt themselves to true and real Honour, the surest Ascent to that, is by the Steps of Piety and Virtue, not by the Acquisition of envied Power, or transitory Riches, which can put Marks of Distinction only upon our Bodies, and such as will fall off again at the Grave; whereas true Goodness will enable and adorn our Souls, will make them for ever illustrious in Heaven, and cloath them with Glory, that shall never be taken from them.

This is Part of what we may learn from what we find in this Relation which our Saviour here gives us. And, before I proceed to the Subject which my Text more immediately determines me to treat of, I

292 SERMON XIII.

shall take Notice of one Thing more, which occurs here to us.

The Rich Man, after he had in vain begged for some Alleviation of his own Sufferings, is represented as entreating *Abraham* to send *Lazarus* from the Dead, to acquaint his Brethren with the miserable Condition he was in, that thereby they might take Warning, and by living better than he had done, might escape the Bitterness of those Torments, which he then felt. He thought, (but it will appear he was mistaken) tho' the ordinary Reading, and Preaching of God's Word did not prove effectual to persuade them to repent, yet that so surprizing a Way of Application, as the coming of one to them from the Dead for that Purpose, could not fail of being successful; and therefore earnestly begged, and repeated his Petition, that *Lazarus* might be sent to them, in

Hopes

SERMON XIII. 293

Hopes that he might prevail upon them, tho' other Means were ineffectual.

This is what may seem something strange to us, That one in Hell should be thus anxious and solicitous for others; and it might be thought, that he had Misery enough of his own to keep him from concerning himself in the Affairs of other Men. But so it is. And as, from the 10th Verse of the foregoing Chapter, we are taught, that our Repentance, and every Advance we make in the Way of Life, is Matter of Rejoycing in Heaven, and an Addition to the Happiness of the blessed Angels of God; so from this Place we have Reason to conclude, that our Continuance in Sin aggravates the Sufferings, and increases the Sorrows of the lost and miserable Souls in Hell. It is strange, I say, that those Glorious Spirits,
which

294 SERMON XIII.

which are already happy, should interest themselves in our Repentance; and that those who despair of ever being free from Misery themselves, should be any way concerned what becomes of others, or endeavour to keep them from feeling those Torments which they undergo: But is it not much more unaccountable, that Men should all this while be so unconcerned for themselves, and take so very little Care upon their own Account; that they should pass through the World, like the Five Brethren here mentioned, careless, secure, and negligent of their own eternal Interest, either never designing to repent, or expecting Miracles, and Messengers from the Dead to awake them from their Lethargy, and persuade them to see their Danger.

We find the Wretch here represented, desirous to preserve his Brethren

SERMON XIII. 295

thren from Ruin, tho' he had lost himself. He desires *Abraham* to send *Lazarus* from the Dead for that End; but the Answer of *Abraham* shews, that his Desire was not fit to be granted, and that there was no Necessity of sending from the Dead, on purpose to acquaint them with what they might know without such a Messenger. *They have Moses and the Prophets, let them hear them.* This is as much as if he had said: They may find, in the Writings of *Moses* and the Prophets, sufficient Arguments to convince them of the Necessity of Repentance, and of the Danger they are in; If they therefore will attend to those, there will be no Need of sending to them from the Dead. But we find the Rich Man persists in his Request, and urges, *Nay, Father Abraham, but, if one went unto them from the Dead, they would repent.*

296 SERMON XIII.

repent. He thought, that however ineffectual the ordinary hearing from others, or reading the Word of God themselves might be; yet that so extraordinary, and astonishing a Message could not but make some Impression upon them, and so much as should be sufficient to persuade them to repent. This, it seems, was his Opinion; but the Answer which *Abraham* makes to him, shews that he was mistaken in thinking so: For *Abraham* said unto him, *If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, tho' one rose from the dead.* These are the Words of my Text; and the Sense of them is: That they who will not be persuaded to repent, and amend their Lives, by such Motives as are offered to them from the Holy Scriptures, will never be persuaded to it by any other Means, how miraculous soever they may be.

The

SERMON XIII. 297

The Terms used in my Text need but very little Explication. By *Moses* and the Prophets, is meant so much of the Holy Scripture as was written when our Saviour spake these Words, namely, The Books of the Old Testament: Which were commonly divided, either into *Moses*, or (which is the same Thing) the Law, and the Prophets. There were other Titles, under which the several Parts of the Old Testament were reduced: Such as the Historical Part, and what was especially called the Holy Writings. But these may all be included among the Prophets; and had they been left out by *Abraham*, the Scriptures would not have so effectually answered the End which he recommended them for. These do, most of all the other Books of the Old Testament, abound with Examples of the Judgments, and Mercy of God; with

298 SERMON XIII.

Rules and Maxims of Virtue and Religion ; with excellent and lively Motives to stir us up to the Praise and Adoration of God ; and with Promises of Rewards to Goodness, and Threats against Sin. If *Abraham* therefore declares the Way to Repentance was the hearing *Moses* and the Prophets, we must suppose, that by them he meant the whole Old Testament ; since any other Meaning would exclude those Parts of it, which are of the greatest Efficacy for this Purpose. We see, that by *Moses* and the Prophets is here understood the Old Testament, which is so much of the Scripture as was extant when these Words were spoken.

This Men are to hear, if they would be persuaded to repent. They are not only in private to read them, but to attend the Reading and Explanation of them in publick, and
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SERMON XIII. 299

in both to give Attention, and endeavour to be obedient to them. As a right Understanding of these is absolutely necessary, so we ought to use all the Assistance we can have, in order to the gaining it. And as God hath instituted Orders of Men, whose chief Business it is, to propound and explain his Word; we ought not to neglect any Opportunities of hearing it from them; for if we do, we put ourselves out of the ordinary Way of Salvation; and while we neglect to hear *Moses* and the Prophets, it will be in vain for us to think, we can by our own Skill find new and unusual Ways to Heaven, or that God will use extraordinary Means to convert us, when we will not make Use of those, which he hath already provided for us.

The Truth of this I shall now try to shew, and shall endeavour by several Arguments to make it ap-

300 SERMON XIII.

pear, That they who refuse to repent of their Sins, and to live in Obedience to the Laws of God, upon such Motives as are contained in Holy Scripture, will never be persuaded to it by any other Means; how miraculous soever they may be; Those who will not be persuaded by *Moses* and the Prophets, except one rise from the Dead; neither would they be persuaded, tho' one should rise.

I. And in the *First* Place.

They who will not be persuaded to repent by the Reasons which the Holy Scripture offers, can never be persuaded to repent; because all the Reasons, that can be urged to persuade them, may be found in Holy Scripture, and must be drawn from it.

True Repentance consists in a Change of our Minds, rather than
of

SERMON XIII. 301

of our Actions ; for, we may cease from doing an ill Action, upon other Accounts besides a Detestation and Abhorrence of the Wickedness of it. That therefore, which brings us to Repentance, must be something that shall make a Change in our Minds, something that shall convince us that we have done that which is not fit to be done, and that it will be better for us to do otherwise. And the Holy Scripture contains every Thing that can be serviceable to us for this Purpose. If we consider what a Representation the Scriptures make of the Goodness of God, and of the Benefits which we have received from him, we shall certainly be convinc'd, that, in disobeying and offending him, we have done what very ill became us, and was very unworthy of us ; what we ought to be ashamed of, and sorry for ; what we ought to be
careful

302 SERMON XIII.

careful to avoid, for the future. If we consider how the Scripture represents the Justice of God, how severe and terrible his Anger is there said to be, and what dreadful Examples it gives us, of his Vengeance, and of the Punishments which he inflicts upon Sin and Wickedness: And, on the other hand, how inviting his Mercy is to the Penitent, and what Encouragements are there offered to those that return to him; If we consider all this, with that Seriousness which the Importance of it doth deserve, we cannot but be persuaded, that it is best for us to endeavour to change our Lives, to leave the dangerous Place we stand in, and to seek Protection from God's Vengeance, under the Wings of his Mercy. These are the Arguments the Scriptures have to persuade us to repent. These are very efficacious for that Purpose, being
instructed
fitted

SERMON XIII. 303

fitted to change our Minds, and, by shewing us the base and the dangerous Nature of our Sins, to put us out of Conceit with them, as Things that are both below the Dignity of reasonable Creatures, and contrary to their Interest. Should any one come to us from the Dead, what other Reasons could he offer to persuade us to repent? He could only, either fright us from our Sins, by representing to us God's Justice, and Power; but these we know already to be infinite, from *Moses* and the Prophets: Or else he must shame us out of them, by shewing us, how unworthy a Thing it is to make such ill Returns to so good and bountiful a God; But could he represent God as more good and bountiful to us, than we find him represented in Holy Scripture?

Repentance is a Change of our Minds; This Change is to be made only

304 SERMON XIII.

only by Reason, and satisfactory Argument, which will be the same to us, and have the same Effect upon us, from whomsoever it comes; and an Argument which, when we have considered it, fails of convincing us from *Moses* and the Prophets, will be as ineffectual, tho' it should be offered to us by one that is sent from the Dead: For, whatever Effect a sudden Fright might have upon us for the present, nothing but such Reason as will convince us we are now in the wrong, can produce a settled Change in our Minds, which will be determined, in that Case, by the Truth of what is offered, and not by the Manner it is offered in.

It is therefore evident, in the First Place, since all the Arguments that can be us'd to dispose us to repent, are to be found in *Moses* and the Prophets, that They who will not be persuaded by them, *neither will they*
be

SERMON XIII. 305

be persuaded, though one rose from the Dead.

II. A *Second* Argument to prove the Truth of my Text, is this. They who refuse to take Notice and make Use of the Means which God hath provided to bring them to Repentance, will never be brought to it, by any other; for they cannot expect any Assistance from the Grace of God, without which all other Endeavours will be ineffectual. It is not the Application of any thing, how miraculous soever from without, that can produce a Change within us, except the Grace of God co-operates with it, and gives Success to it. And how can they expect this, who slight what God hath already done for them, and reject those Means which he hath thought to be sufficient for the Instruction of Mankind in his Will, and bringing

Vol. II. R r them

306 SERMON XIII.

them under Obedience to it? Were they desirous to repent, they might be convinced of the Necessity of it, without Miracles, by the Reasons which are to be found in Holy Scripture. But if they have no Thoughts or Desire of it, as they cannot expect Assistance from God, while they continue in such a Temper of Mind; so without it, no Miracles will be sufficient to persuade them. This is sufficiently verified by Examples of those, who have continued impenitent under the most astonishing and miraculous Dispensations of God's Providence. *Pharaoh* and the *Egyptians* In the Days of *Moses*; the *Jews* through the whole Course of their History, and more especially since the Time of our Saviour's coming in the Flesh, have sufficiently made this to appear, That when God doth not give Assistance with his especial Grace,

and

SERMON XIII. 307

and Men's Minds are not in a good Disposition, no outward Miracles will be able to bring them to Repentance. The *Jews* who, before our Saviour's Death, would not be perswaded to repent, and believe in him, by those Arguments which he produced to them out of *Moses* and the Prophets, neither would they be perswaded when he rose again from the Dead. Nor, when they did believe, was it upon any other Motives, than what the Apostles offered to them from *Moses* and the Prophets, by shewing how exact, and concurrent a Testimony they all gave to the Truth of what our Saviour said ; as we may find in many Places of the *Acts of the Apostles*, where their Sermons are recorded. Thus we find, that as those, who refuse to be led to Repentance by such Motives as God himself uses, have no Reason to expect the Affi-

308 SERMON XIII.

stance of his Grace ; so without that, all other Means, how miraculous soever, will prove ineffectual ; they will not, they cannot be persuaded, *even though one rose from the dead.*

III. *Thirdly,* He that could not be persuaded to serve God, except one rose from the Dead, could never serve God acceptably, because the Service he paid upon such a Motive only, would not be agreeable to that which God requires.

God requires that our Service should be most free and unconstrained ; and therefore hath left us at as full Liberty to chuse, whether we will serve him or no, as it is possible Reasonable Creatures can be, who have Rewards proposed on the one hand, and Punishments on the other. And as, if these Rewards and Punishments were visible to us, during the Time of our Continuance here, they

SERMON XIII 309

they would put upon us such a Force, as that we should not be able to do any thing, that might tend to deprive us of the one of these, or expose us to the other; So he hath thought fit to keep these out of our Sight, that thereby he may the better prove us, whether we will believe him, while he assures us such Rewards are reserved for our Obedience, and in that Faith serve him, or whether we will not. And this Faith, as it is the Foundation of our Obedience, so is it the Reason for which our Service is acceptable to God. For this shews that we do believe him, and trust in him, and that we are willing to depend upon the Truth of his Promises of rewarding our Service, without desiring any further Assurance of it than his Word. This Faith, I say, is that which makes our Service acceptable to God, and therefore that which

310 SERMON XIII.

which in this Life (which is our Time of Trial) puts an End to this Faith, puts an End to our being able to approve ourselves acceptable Servants to God, if we had not done it effectually before. But certainly one coming to us from the Dead, upon the Account we are treating of, and appearing in our Sight, whether in a happy, or a miserable Condition, would put an End to our Faith, and turn it into Sight; would make our Service, after that, the Product of invincible Fear, and no longer the Fruit of Faith or Belief. For doubtless, as hereafter Men shall always continue unalterably good, or the contrary, after once their Faith is turned into Sight; so it would be in the present Case. If Men were good, when Sight puts a Period to their Faith, they would always continue so; and if they were wicked when their Uncertainty was ended, they

SERMON XIII. 311

they would be wicked still. They would find it too late to go about to amend themselves, because it would be out of their Power to pay any other Service than what was forced, and therefore unacceptable to God, and unavailable to them. We may therefore be assured, that if Men will not be persuaded to repent by the Scriptures, before one come to them from the Dead, it will be too late for them to endeavour at it afterwards: If they will not hear God speaking to them, by his Servants, from the Scriptures, *neither will they be persuaded, though one should come to them from the Dead.*

I have now endeavoured by some Arguments to prove the Truth of the Text. There are many useful Inferences that may be made from it. We may from hence observe the Excellency and Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures. We may see the
Necessity

312 SERMON XIII.

Necessity of hearing and obeying them. We may see how inexcusable our Impenitence must be, if we continue in it, who have not only *Moses* and the Prophets, but also the Books of the New Testament, in which we have one who is come to us from the Dead, even *Jesus Christ*, who was dead, and is alive for evermore. But I shall only make one Inference from what hath been said, and with it conclude.

We may from hence learn how desperate their Condition is, who, while they refuse to believe, or neglect to obey the Word of God recorded in Holy Scripture, continue, as they must do, in impenitent Wickedness. As for those, who refuse to be convinced of the Reality of future Punishments for their Wickedness, by such Evidence as the Scriptures afford, there can be little said to them, nor is it to any Purpose

SERMON XIII 313

Purpose to say much. They will not believe the Miracles in Scripture; because they see none now; and with the Scoffers in 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4. make no Account of any thing hereafter, but think Things will always be as they now are, *because, since the Fathers fell asleep, all Things continue as they were from the Beginning of the Creation.* Could they now see some Miracles, they think they could then believe the rest, and repent. This is the same Mistake which the Rich Man carried to Hell with him, and which it may be contributed very much to the bringing him thither. They surely must needs be in an ill Condition, for whom there is not Evidence enough in Scripture to convince them, and who, if they had more than is there, would find it too much. However, they need not be at a Loss for a Miracle now. There are Miracles in

Vol. II. S f Mora-

314 SERMON XIII.

Morality, as well as in Physicks ; and if they would but seriously consider even their own Infidelity, they would find that very unaccountable. If they cannot believe the Truths of Religion, upon greater and clearer Evidence, than that which they cannot deny their Assent to in Things of no Importance to them, what natural Cause can they assign for the Reason of it ? If they find a constant Tendency in themselves to do Things contrary to that Reason, which they own they ought to be governed by, what Principle within themselves can they ascribe it to ? Religion indeed tells us, that some Men lie under a judicial Hardness and Stupidity, and that their Eyes are so blinded, that they cannot see ; It assures us, that our Nature is depraved by our Sins, and that of our First Parents. If they can assign no other Cause for these Things, they

have

SERMON XIII. 315

have some Reason to believe these. But as at first it was their Fault, when they *Would* not attend to these Things; so now it is their Condemnation, and they *Cannot*, except God shall please to relieve them, by Methods which are unknown to us. For those, who, professing themselves to be Believers of what is contain'd in the Scriptures, do yet live as tho' they believed not, and make no Account of the frequent and awakening Admonitions that it gives them; Let them only sit in Judgment upon themselves, and they will find that it must be no favourable Sentence, that will pass hereafter upon those that slight the Commands, that contemn the Majesty, and abuse the Patience, of a Holy, Just, and an Almighty God. They will find, that if they do not in Time render themselves to the powerful Persuasions to Goodness, that

316 SERMON XIII.

are there offered to them, they can never meet with any that will prevail upon them; They will find that, *if they bear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, even though one rose from the Dead.*



SER.

Blessed and in the Favour of



SERMON XIV.

Psalm xciv. 12. Part of 13.

Blessed is the Man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy Law.

That thou mayest give him Rest from the Days of Adversity.

FROM the Words of this Text we may be taught the following Particulars:

I. *First, From whence it is, that the Afflictions of such as are Blessed,*

318 SERMON XIV.

Blessed and in the Favour of God, do come, namely, from God, who chasteneth them.

II. *Secondly*, For what Ends these Chastisements are intended.

III. *Thirdly*, What the Duty is of those who are in Adversity. And,

IV. *Fourthly*, What Benefits will redound from Afflictions, to those who make a right Use of them.

I. *First*, From this Text we are taught, whence the Afflictions of such as are here spoken of, such as are especially regarded of God, such as are Blessed, do come; namely, from God, who chasteneth them.

That any such Thing as Affliction is at all in the World; that there is any Trouble, or Sorrow to be met with, may, in one respect, be truly said to be caused by Man, as it was
his

SERMON XIV. 319

his Sin, which at first brought Death, and whatever tends to it, upon himself: For in the Meaning of the Word *Death*, in the Scripture, is for the most Part included, not only the End, but the Miseries of Life. Eternal Death doth not signify utter Extinction, and Annihilation, but Everlasting Misery: As Immortal Life is always understood to mean the endless Duration, not only of bare Existence, but of infinite Felicity.

That any Affliction befalls Man, is to be imputed to himself; to that Disobedience and Sin of his, by which Death entred into the World; But the Disposal, and Distribution of this Cup of Bitterness; who shall drink thereof; at what Time, and in what Proportion; by what Means and Instruments it shall be administered to him, and when it shall be taken from him; All this is only in the

320 SER MON XIV

the Hand of God, who makes all Causes conduce to the executing his Will, and the manifesting his Greatness, and Goodness.

It is for want of considering this, that we for the most part make Mistakes, in judging of the true Cause of the Troubles which we undergo. For Instance:

If these our Troubles are brought upon us (as most of our Afflictions in some respect are) by our own Imprudence, and Mismanagement; we repine at our own Folly, and blame ourselves, as we justly may; but too often neglect to make that Use of them, which we ought to do; and by which alone we can reap any Benefit from our Afflictions; I mean, the looking upon them as Corrections sent from God, to chastise our Follies, and Sins, which we have already committed; and (by making us experience the troublesome Consequences

SERMON XIV. 321

sequences of them) to amend, and preserve us from them, for the future. Again,

If our Adversity is brought upon us by the Wickedness of other Men ; it is usual for us to look no further than to the most immediate Cause ; to exclaim against the Malice, the Injustice, the Ingratitude, the Treachery, and the Cruelty of those Men, at whose Hands we receive Evil, and by whom we are oppressed, or undone : And this is what we may continue to do to the End of our Lives, and may wear ourselves out, and weary all that come within the Hearing of our Repinings, without any way amending either our Condition, or ourselves, by so doing ; or (which it may be we almost equally desire) any way hurting, or disturbing those, by whom we are aggrieved. It would be better Employment for us, and turn much

322 SERMON XIV.

to our Advantage in such uneasy Circumstances, to consider, that, be the Wickedness of other Men never so great, it would no way affect us, were it not over-ruled to that Purpose, by the Will of God. All the Events of this World, and the Designs and Actions which produce them, are under the Power, and Direction of Divine Providence : And therefore (how little soever the Actor, the immediate Doer of Evil to us may design, or consider it) We ought to regard whatever befalls us, as sent to us by God, how wicked and unacceptable soever the Hand may be, at which we most immediately receive it. And, if we can receive Affliction with that Submission, and Resignation, which is owing from us to the Will of God who lays it upon us, we shall regard the Wickedness of Men with no other Concern than that of Pity, who
while

SERMON XIV. 323

while they design to oppress and ruin us, are preparing us for the more abundant Favour of God, and themselves for the most grievous Sufferings and Punishments.

Again: If we labour under Calamities, which cannot be properly imputed to either of the aforementioned Causes, either to our own Imprudence, or to the Wickedness of other Men; if our Bodies labour under Pain, and Sicknes; if our dearest Friends are taken from us by Death; if our Condition (by unavoidable Calamities) without any Want of Industry, and Carefulness on our Part, be reduced to the utmost Penury, and Indigence; We must be sure that it is the good Pleasure of God, by which all this is brought upon us. This is not to be ascribed to blind Chance; Affliction cometh not out of the Dust, nor doth Trouble spring out of the Ground:

324 SERMON XIV.

Ground: Nor doth it come upon us by a fatal, unalterable, necessary Chain of Causes; but according to the Direction, and by the Appointment of a Wise, Just, and Merciful Being, for good Purposes; It is (as the Royal Preacher expresses himself, *Eccles. i. 13.*) *God that hath given this sore Travel to the Sons of Men, to be exercised therewith.* In his Hand alone are the Issues of Life, and Death; It is his Power, which directs all that appears to be perfectly contingent to us: Healthful, and fruitful Seasons; Success, or Disappointment of our Endeavours; and all Things else, upon which the good Condition and Enjoyment, or the Afflictions and Miseries of Human Life depend, these are determined by him, and him only; and therefore, as while we enjoy the more agreeable Portion of these, we ought never to cease returning our

Thanks,

SERMON XIV. 325

Thanks, and Praise to him for them ; so, whenever we labour under the Pressure, and uneasy Load of Trouble, by what Means soever it comes to us, we ought to know that it all comes from God, whose Providence hath directed it to us.

For what Purposes he doth so, and what the End is, which he proposes to obtain by it, is what I am now to enquire after, in the

II. *Second Place.* My Text calls God's afflicting us, Chastening, and Teaching us. I shall speak of each of these singly. And,

First, The Notion of Chastening includes in it both Justice, and Mercy ; it is Punishment mixt with Love ; it is severe in Appearance, but in Reality intended, not for the Damage, but for the Benefit of him who undergoes it.

And

326 SERMON XIV.

And this is the Gracious Purpose of Almighty God, in his Chastising of his Servants. They are his *Children, and those whom he loveth, that he chasteneth*; but still they are but Men, beset with Temptations; frail, and unable always to watch against them; and oftentimes, and in many Things offending. An uninterrupted Succession of Enjoyment would keep them from considering this, so much as they ought to do. They would slacken their Vigilance; they would forget their Creator; and the Pleasures of the Things that are seen, would altogether engage their Affections, and exclude all Hopes, and Thoughts of Invisible, Eternal Enjoyments: This is the constant, Natural Bent, and Tendency of a Weakened, and Sinful Nature: To fix altogether upon present Ease and Pleasure, of how mean a Kind soever it may be, while no Labour,

no

SERMON XIV. 327

no Self-Denial is required of it; and to avoid every thing that is disagreeable, or troublesome in View, however necessary, and profitable it may be in the End.

But God more truly loves his Children, than to indulge them thus to their Death: He, by light and momentary Afflictions, awakes them from this destructive Lethargy; He lets them see (by what cannot fail of convincing them, I mean their own Experience) that they are in the wrong; that they offend him, and injure themselves; while, for the sake of such empty, deceitful, and short-lived Pleasures, which they are taken up altogether with, they neglect the Service which they owe to him, and which he is ready to reward with so much better Enjoyments, than what they pursue: He, by interrupting their present Delights, shews them how soon they end,

328 SERMON XIV.

end, and fail them; by laying his afflicting Hand upon them, he makes them remember him, and return to his Service, and thereby stops, and withdraws them out of that Way, which, tho' at their Entrance upon it, it might seem *right to them, yet the End of it is the Way of Death*: He gently correcteth those Errors, which otherwise might prove incorrigible by long Continuance; and provides, by the present Amendment of his Children, for their future, and eternal Well-Being.

Thus it is that God chasteneth; that he afflicts, in any Manner, his Servants, is out of his Love to, and Concern for them; and the End he attains by it is their Good, as their present Temporary Punishments prevent the more durable and grievous ones, which would else attend upon an uninterrupted Course of neglecting him, and offending against his Laws. But

SERMON XIV. 329

But (besides this) there is another gracious Purpose in God's chastening us; and that is, Instructing us, *Teaching us out of his Law.*

As often as we find ourselves under the afflicting Hand of God, so often may we assure ourselves, God seeks our Amendment, and to correct what is amiss in us. We shall, for that Reason, think it proper to search out what that is, which we need most to amend, and wherein we have been chiefly wanting in discharging the Duty, and Service which we owe to him. In order to which, we shall find it necessary to betake ourselves to the diligent Study of his Law; Our readiest Way to find, how far we have transgressed, and to avoid doing so any longer, being to return, as soon as we can, to that right Way or Path, that sure Direction, which is only to be met with in his Word.

330 SERMON XIV.

If we have been misled by the Temptations of the Devil, we shall there be best directed, how to resist and to watch against them : If, for Instance, our Spiritual Enemy hath brought us into a careless, and presumptuous Indifference, and Negligence of our Duty ; We shall there be taught how offensive that is to God, who requires us to *work out our Salvation with Fear, and Trembling* ; Who (as he is most worthy of it) so he demands *to be feared, and had in Reverence, of all that are round about him* : And to whose infinite Majesty and Sovereignty, the Sons of Men (whatever Distinction they may use towards one another) are all equally subject, and equally obliged, either to yield Obedience, or to suffer the grievous Punishment of his just Indignation, and Vengeance, if they refuse, or neglect to pay it.

If,

SERMON XIV. 331

If, on the other Hand, the Adversary of our Souls tempts us into false Fears, and ill-grounded Doubts; If he represents to us the Greatness of our Sins, and seeks to persuade us that they are unpardonable; That God is unchangeably Just, and must avenge himself upon us, for our Offences against him: If, by these Insinuations, he attempts to deprive us of all Trust in God's Goodness, and to make us despair of his Mercy; If he brings us into any Danger of this Sorrow, to which no other Sorrow is to be compared, either for Bitterness, or Danger; the Law of God is what we must be taught by, how to escape out of these Snares. If we betake ourselves to God, and to his Word, He will *teach us out of his Law.* He will there inform us, that, whatever our Sins are, he hath provided a Satisfaction, a Propitiation, a Ransom

332 SERMON XIV.

for them, in the precious Blood of his Dear Son Christ Jesus: That, in, and through him, He is a Gracious, and a Merciful God; a God forgiving Iniquity, Transgression, and Sin; a God that is not extreme to mark what is done amiss, that desireth not the Death of a Sinner, but is better pleased to see him turn from his Wickedness, and live. That (if we will believe these his Gracious Assurances, and will repent of, and cease from those Sins, which have been so grievous to us;) He will heal that which he had smitten; He for the broken Heart which we had offered to him, will create us a New and a Glad one; and will make that, which he had wounded, to rejoice.

Further: If our Neglect of God proceed from our too great Love of this World, and its Enjoyments; if the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the

SERMON XIV. 333

the Eye, and the Pride of Life, or (in other Words) the sensual Pleasures, the Riches, and the Honours of this Life, do possess our Affections, and employ us altogether in their Service; God, after he hath by afflicting us, and breaking off the Course of these short-lived Pleasures, made us know, how worthless and vain they are, and how unable to answer our Desires; will teach us out of his Law to aim at Nobler Enjoyments: He will direct our Eyes, and Hearts, our Desires, and Endeavours to such Pleasures, as shall never cease, never meet with any Check, or Interruption; never pall, or wear out in the Enjoyment; and no otherwise disappoint our Hopes and Expectations, than by exceeding them, in their most enlarged Extent. Is our Mind at present inclined to the Love of Riches, we may be taught out of his Law to seek the

Treasures

334 SERMON XIV.

Treasures which are in Heaven,
where neither Rust nor Moth do cor-
rupt, and where Thieves do not break
through and steal. Do our Hearts
 swell with the Desire of Glory?
 We may in his Law find that the
 truest Glory is that of Heaven,
 which hath neither Measure, nor
 End. Is Pleasure our Aim? We
 shall find in his Word, that we ought
 to look for it in the *Presence of God,*
where alone the Fulness of it abides
for evermore. This is what God
 teaches us out of his Law: And, in
 order to our learning this effectual-
 ly, it is, that he is pleased to chasten
 us. This is the Fruit of his Love
 towards us, which (by shewing us
 the Danger and Emptiness of this
 World's Allotments) sets our Affecti-
 ons at Liberty from them; and fixes
 our Desires upon what alone can sa-
 tisfy them, Perfect Enjoyments, and
 of the same Continuance with that
 immortal

SERMON XIV. 335

immortal Soul, which aspires to them.

I shall now in the

III. *Third* Place enquire what the Duty of Men is, while they are under the afflicting Hand of God. My Text tells us, that *God chasteneth a Man, and teacheth him out of his Law, that he may give him Patience in Time of Adversity, or, Rest from the Days of Adversity.*

And certainly a more effectual Argument for Patience under Affliction, could never have been found, than this which is here proposed to us. God is he that afflicts us, shall we murmur and repine against him? He corrects us, because we have by our Transgressions deserved his Anger; Shall we, can we (with any Justice) complain? He afflicts us for our Good; to preserve us from more grievous, and remediless Afflictions;

336 SERMON XIV.

afflictions; Shall we grow weary, or faint under that very Hand, which is reached out for our Benefit, and Rescue? Shall we not rather (with the most perfect, and resigned Submission) commit ourselves to him, and make it our Endeavour to answer his Gracious Purpose toward us, by amending whatever is amiss, and offensive to him in us; by setting ourselves more diligently to serve, and please him for the future; and by returning (as we ought to do) our unfeigned Thanks to him, for his Fatherly Care of us, while (by Chastening us as such) he acknowledges us for his Children?

If we can profit thus much by Afflictions: If, by them, we can be brought to amend ourselves, and to serve God more carefully than before; if we can wean our Affections from this World, and fix them upon a better; if we can be guarded
more

SERMON XIV. 337

more effectually against Temptations of every Kind; and brought to the more constant Study, and Performance of the Will of God; We shall then arrive at something more than Patience: We shall find Matter, even for Joy, in the midst of Adversity. We shall find it to be good for us that we have been in Trouble, because, until then, we went wrong. We shall find how strictly true that seeming Paradox is, which is the Beginning of my Text; *Blessed is the Man, whom thou chastenest, O Lord!* Which is what I proposed to speak of, as the

IV. Fourth and last General Head of my Discourse. The Profit and Benefit which redounds to a Man, from a right Use of his Afflictions, is Bliss. The Man whom God chasteneth, and teacheth out of his Evil, that he may give him Patience

338 SERMON XIV

in, or Rest from, the Days of Ad-
 versity, That Man is Blessed. To
 understand this Truth effec-
 tually, we must consider what it is
 to be truly Blessed. We shall then
 find it is not to know no Trouble, or
 Affliction: If that were the Case,
 no Man in this World, which is a
 Vale of Tears, could ever be pro-
 nounced Blessed. It is not to possess the greatest
 Share of this World's Enjoyment;
 for if it were, the worst of Men
 would sometimes be most truly to
 be called Blessed; whereas Blessed-
 ness always includes in its Meaning
 the distinguished Love, and especial
 Favour of God. But to be Blessed, is to be assured
 of the Mercy of God, and to be
 able to preserve the Hopes of Glory,
 and to use the Means of Grace, be-
 out Condition (in respect of outward
 Circumstances) what it will in this
 World.

SERMON XIV. 339

No Condition upon Earth is wholly free from Trouble; but, in every State of Life, a Man may preserve his Contentment, and Rest of Soul, so far as to support himself under all present Sorrows, by stedfastly fixing his Sight upon future Happiness; and may (by the assured Hopes of Felicity in a better World) find himself disengag'd, and free from this, and ready to quit it with Joy, as knowing that, while he stays here, he can never wholly rest from all his Labours.

Blessed therefore is the Man whom God Chasteneth! that is, in other Words, the Man whose past Faults are already punished; whose future Life is guarded against Temptations; whose Trust in God's Fatherly Love is quickened, and confirmed by the Experience which he hath of his Regard for him; whose Hopes of Happiness are rectified, are taken

340 SERMON XIV.

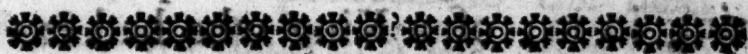
off from the empty and deceitful
Allurements of this World; and
who is taught patiently to wait for
the Consummation of his Felicity,
till he comes (where alone it is to
be found) to the Presence of God
in Heaven, and to the Enjoyment of
his only true Happiness, and Glory,



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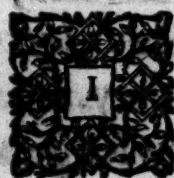


SERMON XV.



2 Sam. xxiii. Part of the 3d Verse.

*He that ruleth over Men must be
just, ruling in the Fear of God.*



IN the Context, we find
what may render these
Words deserving of our
greatest Regard, and Con-
sideration:

We are told, in the first Verse of
this Chapter, that *These are the last*
Words

342 SERMON XV.

Words of David, the Son of Jesse, the Man who was raised up on high, the Anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel.

They are therefore the Words of a Wise and Good Man, and a Great and Victorious Prince: Of a King who well knew what was his Duty, and what the Consequences were of either deviating from it, or persevering in it; of a King who had experienced, and made his Way thro' Dangers and Difficulties, and, after a long and glorious Reign, left his Kingdom enlarged, and flourishing in Wealth, and Peace.

We are further to take Notice, that these are said to be his *last* Words: Which implies that they are the Result of his whole Knowledge, and Experience as a Ruler; and therefore may well deserve, that those who are Rulers should take them into most serious Consideration.

With

SERMON XIV. 343

With respect then to the Person, whose Words, whose *last* Words these are said to be, they may be looked upon as Words of Great Weight, and Importance; and such as would be entitled the Regard of all whom they concern, had they been delivered only by way of Observation, or Advice.

But, if we proceed to the next Verses, we shall find that they may claim a much greater Authority, than what their being spoken by the Greatest, the Wisest, and Best of Mankind, could give to them.

The Spirit of the Lord (saith David in the 1st and 2d Verses) *spake by me, and his Word was in my Tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over Men will be just, ruling in the Fear of God.*

What therefore David saith to all other Rulers, was first said to him
by

844 SERMON XXV

by the Spirit of God, by the God of Israel; and therefore they are to be considered, by Rulers, as the Will, and Command of God to them; and careful Obedience must be given to these Words, by those to whom Obedience is due from the rest of Mankind.

I shall apply myself, in discoursing upon these Words,

First, To consider the Duties of Rulers, as here laid down:

And, the Will, and

II. Secondly, To enquire into the Motives, and Obligations, which enforce the Observation of those Duties.

III. First, I am to consider those Duties of Rulers, which are mentioned in my Text: *He that ruleth over Men must be just; what he must rule in the Fear of God.*

In

SERMON XV. 345

In the first Place, it is required of him that ruleth over others, that he be Just:

Without entring into any Enquiries after the Nature of Justice as a Virtue; or distinguishing between the several Kinds of it, I shall reckon that he who ruleth over Men is Just, if he sincerely, and to the utmost of his Power, endeavours to answer the Trust which is reposed in him; and aims at that End, for obtaining which his Authority was given to him.

From this Account of Justice, the Ruler's Duty may be clearly, and intelligibly deduced: For whatever Disputes there may have been concerning the Authority and Powers of the Ruler, whence they are derived, and how far they extend, whether they are founded upon the Gift of God, or the Ordinance and Appointment of Man only; there is

346 SERMON XV.

no Debate concerning the End of Government, and the Reason for which the Ruler is invested with his Powers. It is on all Hands agreed, that the Good and Welfare of the Publick is the End of Government. And, as they who would make the Ruler to derive his Authority from the Consent of the People say, that he is erected for the Benefit and Security of the Society ; so they, who assert him to be the Ordinance of God, do acknowledge that he is Minister of God for *Good* : That Government is the Institution of God for the Common-Weal, and Safety of Mankind : And therefore both concur in this, That the Ruler, if he be Just, if he be careful to answer the Trust reposed in him, (whether it be by God or Man) must make the Publick Welfare, and Peace, and Safety of those whom he is set over, his constant Concern,

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SERMON XV. 347

and employ the Powers which are put into his Hand, altogether for the obtaining, and preserving them.

He who maturely, and carefully considers this, will quickly understand that, in order to the Ruler's being Just, in order to his answering the Ends of his Institution, and discharging himself as he ought, as he is in Justice bound, of the Trust which he undertakes, all his Diligence and Circumspection, all his Integrity and Courage, all his Skill and Wisdom must be continually employed; and that his Office, as it is attended with Honour and Power, so is it also with Difficulty and Labour.

The Welfare of the Publick is the Mark he is to aim at. But is there no Danger of his aiming amiss? Is it a Thing so well agreed upon and fixed, What the Publick Good is, as that there can be no Mistake

348 SERMON XV.

about it? Every particular Man will endeavour to make him look for the Publick Good, in that which perhaps is only his own particular, Personal Concern, or Interest, or Humour; and where Multitudes have an equal Right in the Ruler, whose several Interests are contrary, perplexed, and variable (which yet is the Case of every Ruler) how many false Marks shall he be solicited, and directed to aim at? And how very difficult will it be made for him, to distinguish from them, that which is the true one?

Further. Besides the Uncertainty and Doubts he may be led into, as to his general Purpose, and Conduct in his Rule, particular Difficulties will be continually rising; whether from the Intricacy of such Matters, as it will be his Business to hear, and to determine; or from the Subtlety and Management of those who bring them

SERMON XV. 349

them to him, involv'd in Doubts of their own making, and disguis'd in the false Colours which they put upon them, on purpose to mislead his Judgment, and (however he may design it) to hinder him from being Just.

And yet this is far from being all the Difficulty which he will meet with, who (being to rule over Men) desires to rule them *Justly*. For, besides what he shall find from *other* Men, he shall perhaps perceive it to be no easy Matter to surmount those Obstacles in his way to being a *Just* Ruler, which he shall meet with in *himself*: Every Passion and Inclination which he hath, will in its Turn stand in his way, and strive to be his Hindrance. His Pity and Compassion will intercept the Sword, and make it to be borne in vain, if he yield to it: His Anger and Resentments will urge him to strike beyond

350 SERMON XV.

beyond Measure, and without Cause, if he do not effectually curb and subdue them; Friendship will be apt to blind his Eyes, Enmity to harden his Heart, his high Rank to make him despise the Poor, and his Apprehension of Danger to fear the Rich and Powerful, unless he fix and preserve in his Mind this necessary Thought and Resolution, That, be his Inducements to the contrary of what Kind and Strength soever, he must have no Regard to them, because God commands, and requires that he who ruleth over Men *must be just*. This Duty lies upon all Rulers as such, whether they be Supreme as Kings, or whether they be Subordinate, and sent by them, as Governors, to punish Evil-doers, and to protect, and honour those that do well. This Duty, I say, concerns them all; but I shall consider it at
beyond present,

SERMON XV. 351

present, chiefly with regard to the latter of these, that what shall be said of it may be the more useful, and pertinent to the Occasion of our being here assembled.

And the Ruler considered in this Capacity, is to consider the Trust which he is honoured and charged with, as it regards Almighty God; as it regards his Sovereign whom he acts under; and as it regards the People whom he is placed over. He is entrusted by, and for each of these; and must therefore consider each of them, in what he doth as a Ruler, if he would be *Just*.

First, In all his Actions as a Ruler, he must consider what he doth, with regard to *God*, who is the Fountain, and Giver of Authority and Power.

The Apprehension of his being God's Minister, of his being entrusted by God, and accountable to him

352 SERMON XV.

him for every thing which he doth as a Ruler, will make him very careful so to employ his Power, as that he may hope to approve himself to God as a Faithful Servant, and obtain the Commendation and Reward of having been so, when he shall be called upon for an Account of his Behaviour.

In order to this, he will think himself obliged to promote, with his utmost Endeavour, as the Good and Benefit of the People committed to his Charge, so likewise the Honour, and Service of that God, whose Substitute he is, and who hath entrusted that Charge to him.

The Favour and Blessings of God are the surest Grounds of the People's Welfare; and as these may most reasonably be hoped for by such as faithfully endeavour to serve, to honour, and to please God; so the promoting God's Honour, and Service

SERMON XV. 353

Service among the People, will be one principal Concern of the Ruler.

In order to this, he will find it incumbent upon him, not only by the strict Execution of good Laws which have been provided by others, to curb and restrain those, who either out of Folly, Malice, Mistake, or Infidelity, dishonour the Name of God, neglect or disturb his Service, contemn his Authority, deny his Truths, and injure and oppress his Servants; but also, by his own Practice and Example, to lead those who are under him to the doing whatever tends to the Glory of God.

He will be constant, and regular in his Attendance upon God's Worship; and ready, and desirous to encourage, and adorn it. He will be zealous for God's Honour, and his Truth, and apprehensive of God's observing his Behaviour: He

354 SERMON XV.

will think himself subject to God, while he is governing Men ; He will rule them in the Fear of God ; that is, he will fear God himself, and (as much as he is able) he will keep up the Fear of him in others.

Secondly, The Subordinate Ruler must consider himself as acting for, and entrusted by, his Sovereign : And therefore that, in order to his being just and faithful, he is bound, in the using the Authority given him by his Prince, to have Regard to his Prince's Honour, and Service.

The Honour of the Prince is founded upon the Welfare, the Safety, and Happiness of his People. And the surest Proof of the Wisdom and Goodness of the Governor, is the Prosperity, the Peace, and flourishing Condition of his Subjects. To separate these from one another, is to destroy both ; and therefore, to his Regard for the Honour and Ser-

vice

SERMON XV. 355

vice of his Sovereign, the Ruler will find it necessary to join, 3dly, a constant Regard to the Good and Welfare of his People, in the Employment of his Authority, and Power.

As the People is made up of many Persons, and those of different Conditions ; so, in order to a Ruler's answering the End of his Institution, it is necessary that he should provide that every Person, of what Condition soever, may find it good for him, and to his Advantage, to obey and support the Government he is under. That the Rich may be safe in the Possession and Enjoyment of that Abundance, which the Providence of God, or their own honest and successful Industry hath made their own : That the Poor may be provided for, and protected from Oppression : That the Good may be encouraged, and guarded

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against

356 SERMON XV.

against the Wicked; and even that the Wicked may be restrained from doing Evil, (as much as may be) and corrected for what they do amiss, that thereby the Number of their Crimes may be lessened, and that they may be brought to Amendment.

In the furthering and obtaining these excellent and noble Ends, the Ruler that is Just will employ all his Endeavour, and all the Power and Authority he is possessed of. Difficulties great and manifold he must expect to meet with in these Pursuits, from the Wickedness or Weakness of other Men, and his own Infirmities.

But then he may encourage himself, and fortify his Resolution to surmount all those Difficulties, while he considers what Helps and Directions he hath to carry him through them.

against

222

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SERMON XV. 357

The Blessing of Almighty God will not be wanting to his Efforts for the Good of Mankind: As God appoints and raises up Rulers for that End, so, while they make it their sincere, and constant, uniform Endeavour to be subservient to that his gracious Purpose, they may depend upon his prospering his own Institution, his enabling them to remove all Impediments, and to break through all Opposition to their good Intentions.

The Assistance of Good Men will be ready, when it is needed: And they will think themselves bound to second, and support those Purposes, in the good Success of which their own Good, and that of the Community they belong to, is interested and included.

The Direction and Authority of Wise and Good Laws, is a powerful Help, and always ready whenever applied

358 SERMON XV.

applied to, for the conquering of such Difficulties, and deciding such Doubts, as, without its Guidance and Assistance, would be too intricate and perplexing, too obstinate and hazardous, to be cleared up, and surmounted.

Happy is it for the People, who enjoy the inestimable Benefit of just and equitable Laws, by which their Duty is described and ascertained, their Persons guarded, their Property established, and secured to them; and the peaceable Enjoyment of their Religious and Civil Liberties and Rights, which they have received from their Ancestors, confirmed to themselves, and transmitted to their Posterity.

And no less happy is the Ruler by the Help of the same Laws, who, upon almost every Difficulty that can arise, knows where to betake himself for Direction how to proceed

SERMON XV. 359

ceed safely, and with sufficient Warrant.

These are Guides that will not mislead him ; Councillors in which there is Safety ; which have no Passions, no sinister Ends, no Prejudice, or Affections to blind them, and to abuse him ; but are the Results of mature Deliberation, and have the Proof and Experience of long Time, and constant Use to aver their Wisdom, and their Goodness.

In a constant Conformity of his Government to such Laws, the Ruler need not be discouraged at the Difficulties of his Trust. While he employs and enforces them, they will not fail to support, and strengthen him ; and, in the Use of them, he will find himself instructed and enabled to be Just in every Regard : To promote the Glory of God, and to rule Men in his Fear ; to maintain the Honour of his Sovereign, and

360 SERMON XV.

and to preserve his Authority; to further the Welfare and Benefit of those whom he is set over; to defend them in their Rights, to redress their Grievances, and to distribute Justice to them all; and, in so doing, to provide effectually for their Peace and Safety.

I have now, as I propos'd, in the first Place considered the Duties of the Ruler, as they are laid down in the Text: And have shewn that, in order to his being Just, and ruling in the Fear of God, he must (in the Employment of his Power and Authority) have a constant Regard to the Glory of God, the Honour and Service of his Sovereign, and the Good and Welfare of those that are under him.

I proceed to the

II. *Second* and only remaining General Head of my Discourse; in which

SERMON XV. 361

which I am to consider the Obligations, and Motives, which enforce the Observation of the Duties I have been treating of. And,

First, The Ruler is under a very strict Obligation to be Just, and to rule in the Fear of God, because so is the Will, and Command of God.

It is *the Spirit of the Lord, it is the God of Israel, who first spake these Words*, to the Ruler whom he had raised up to govern his peculiar People: It is the Ruler whom they are directed to; and therefore it is his undoubted Duty to regard them, and to pay Obedience to them.

It hath too often been the Misery, and Punishment of the World, that when Rulers have fancied themselves to be uncontroulable by Men, they have also been so far mistaken, as to have no Regard to God.

From hence hath proceeded the Oppression of the poor Subject, and

362 SERMON XV.

violent perverting of Judgment, and Justice. But he that is higher than the highest regardeth this, and will make such Rulers to understand, that there is one higher than they, to whom they are subordinate, and who will (in his due Time) exact a severe Account from them, of their Neglect of him, of their casting off his Fear, and their own Justice, and ruling over Men without any respect to the End for which their Power was given to them.

But those who duly consider this will be convinced, that (since God, to whose Grace and Providence they owe their Dignity, hath enjoined and required of them these Duties of Justice to their Subjects, and of Fear towards him) they are obliged, both in Gratitude, and in regard to their own Safety, to be very careful in discharging them, and in obeying that God, who hath indeed appointed

them

SERMON XV. 363

them to govern others, but who requires that they should (nevertheless) consider themselves as his Subjects. A

Second Obligation, which the Ruler is under to rule Men justly, and in the Fear of God, arises from the undoubted Right which Men have to be so governed. For (as I observed in the Beginning of this Discourse) wherever we place the Foundation of Authority, whether in the Appointment of God, or the Consent of Man, the Case will be the same as to the End, and Purpose of Authority.

From one, or both of these, every Ruler derives his Power, and Right to Government; and it can never be imagined, that either God or Man would erect such an Authority to any other Purpose, and with any other View, than that it should be employed as an Instrument of promoting the common Benefit, and

364 SERMON XIV.

Welfare of Mankind; and he, who useth it to any other Purpose, acts so far without Authority, and in Opposition to the End of his own Exaltation. He (as far as he can) defeats the Gracious Design of Almighty God, and defrauds the People of that Benefit, which the Institution of God hath given them a Right to receive from their Subjection to the Higher Powers; of that Good, which God hath appointed the Ruler to be the Minister of to them. The

Third and last Motive which I shall offer, as proper to dispose the Ruler to be Just, and to rule Men in the Fear of God, shall be this Consideration, That by diligently, and constantly promoting the Glory of God, and the Good of Mankind, he most effectually provides for his own truest Honour, and Advantage.

The Benefits which People receive under the happy Government of good

SERMON XV. 365

good and wise Rulers, will chearfully and gratefully be return'd to them, by good Subjects, in thankful Acknowledgments ; free, and unconstrained Obedience ; united Affections, and Endeavours for the Honour, Preservation, and Defence of their Persons, and of their Authority. And, while there is Unity between their Subjects and themselves, they will most probably enjoy Peace, and Security from Abroad ; nothing so effectually discouraging, and terrifying Foreign Enemies, as their Want of Well-wishers to their Attempts, among those whom they would attempt upon.

Thus, by a just Rule, will the Governor best establish his own Honour, Authority, and Safety as to Men ; and, by ruling in the Fear of God ; by advancing God's Glory, and Service ; by encouraging
Virtue,

366 SERMON XV.

Virtue, and Religion ; by restraining and punishing Wickedness ; and, in all his Doings, remembering that he acts for, and under God ; he will entitle himself to God's Favour ; he will draw down his Blessing upon himself, and upon his Government ; and, when he gives up to God an Account of what had been entrusted to him, he shall be honoured with everlasting Applause, and rewarded with an everlasting Kingdom ; for the Faithfulness he had shewed in *few* Things, he shall be made Ruler over *many* Things, and shall for ever enter into the Joy of his Lord.

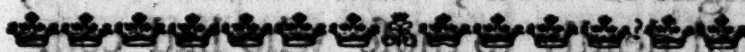


SER.



SERMON XVI.

Preached on a FAST-DAY.



Numb. xi. Part of the 33d Verse.

The Wrath of the Lord was kindled against the People, and the Lord smote the People with a very great Plague.

HA T we may the better
T understand what is said in
 the Text, of God's Wrath
 being kindled, and the People there-
 upon being smitten with a very
 great

368 SERMON XVI.

great Plague by him ; it will be necessary to enquire, in as distinct and exact a Manner as may be, into the Provocation which the Children of *Israel* gave to God ; into the particular Offence which they were then guilty of ; and into the several Circumstances attending it, which may be supposed to have aggravated it, and rendered it so heinous in the Sight of God ; and so destructive, and deadly to those who had committed it.

We find (at the 4th Verse of this Chapter) that the mixed Multitude that was among them fell a Lusting : And that the Children of *Israel* also wept again, and said, *Who shall give us Flesh to eat ?*

What is here said, That the Children of *Israel* wept Again, refers us to an Account of a former Murmuring and Discontent of theirs, which we may find in the 16th Chapter

SERMON XVI. 369

Chapter of *Exodus*, at the 2d Verse, and at the 3d.

The Occasion of this their Murmuring was for Want, or, at least, for Fear of the Want of Bread ; as (in the Chapter before this, at the 24th Verse) we find they had murmured for Drink.

We have therefore three Instances of this their discontented and irreverent Carriage towards God, and the Person whom God had appointed to govern them.

And we may observe how great a Difference God made in his Manner of regarding this Behaviour of theirs: Nor need we to be at any Loss for the Reason of that Difference.

In the first Instance, nothing could be reprehended but the Manner of their making their Wants known to their Ruler ; What they required was what they could not be without ; neither was it for the

370 SERMON XVI.

Gratification of their Lust, but the necessary Sustenance of Life, that they demanded Water to drink.

Accordingly, as this their Uneasiness might be judged to arise rather from Fear, and Want of Necessaries, than from any worse Motive, we find that (without any Kind of Censure or Reproof) God immediately supplied to them what they stood in Need of; and encouraged them to yield Obedience to, and put their Trust in him, by a gracious Promise of providing for them, and protecting them. As we may find in the 15th Chapter of *Exodus*, at the 24th, 25th, and 26th Verses.

In the next Account of their Murmuring (which we have in the 16th Chapter of *Exodus*, at the 2d Verse, and onwards) we find them still only craving meer Necessaries, and regretting the Bread which they had left in *Egypt*, and, for Want of
which,

SERMON XVI. 371

which, they feared they should die with Hunger in the Wilderness.

Here again it pleased God to supply their Wants in a miraculous Manner, by giving them (as the *Psalmist* expresseth it) Bread from Heaven ; by feeding them with *Manna*, 'till they came out of the Desert, into the promised Land which flowed with Milk and Honey ; which was plentifully furnished with all the Necessaries, and Conveniencies of Life.

But, as their undutiful Complaining and Repining was now become more culpable, because they ought to have learn't more Reverence and Trust towards God, having so lately experienced his Care for them, and his Bounty towards them ; so (tho' it pleased God to bestow upon them the Sustenance which they wanted) yet he did not do it without first having them reprov'd for their Mur-

Bbb 2 murings,

372 SERMON XVI.

murings, as we find in the 16th of *Exodus*, at the 7th Verse.

We are now to consider the third Instance (which I have mentioned out of many more which might have been produced) of this stubborn and perverse Disobedience, and Undutifulness towards God and their Governor, which the Children of *Israel* are recorded to have been guilty of, and which provoked against them that Wrath, which my Text mentions, and which proved so destructive to them.

As we find that God animadverted upon this in a very different Manner, than he did upon their other Murmuring, that an Account has been given of; so we may be certain that their Behaviour in this was much more criminal and offensive, than upon the former Occasions. That it was so will be evident, as from that Anger of God which was shewed

SERMON XVI. 373

shewed in so terrible a Manner for it, so from the following Considerations:

First, This their repeated Murmuring and Repining was provoking to God, as it shewed them to make no Account of his former Mercies to them.

This was not the first Time they had apprehended themselves to stand in Need of a Supply of their Wants, and that they had found God both able and willing to give them the Supplies they stood in Need of.

Had they therefore duly regarded God's Mercies, they would not (upon every the first Apprehension of Want of any thing) have broken out into Mutiny, and insolently charged God and his Servant, with having brought them out of *Egypt* to their Loss, as we find they did, *Numb. xi. 5.*

They

374 SERMON XVI.

They had, it seems, already forgot that God had in a miraculous Manner delivered them from Slavery, from Tyranny, and the most insupportable Oppression: That he had made them a Way to escape from their more powerful Enemies, and destroyed those who pursued after them: That he had made the Rock to yield them Drink, and given them Bread from Heaven. As if he, who had done this, deserved no Obedience, no Thanks, no Dependence and Trust from them. As soon as they think they have any other Want, whether real or imaginary, is not yet in Consideration: They behave themselves, as if they knew of no one who was able to relieve, and deliver them from it; As if they had utterly forgot, that God had given to them much greater Deliverances, and provided for them much more needful Supplies, than
what

SERMON XVI. 375

what they could (with any Truth) pretend they then stood in Need of.

To this Purpose the *Psalmist* (in the 78th Psalm, at the 42d Verse) tells us, that, in their thus provoking and grieving God in the Wilderness, (which he had spoken of at the 40th Verse) *They thought not of his Hand, nor of the Day when he delivered them from the Hand of the Enemy.* Upon every slight Occasion they were ready to repine and murmur against him, as if he had neither shewn his Goodness by any former Mercies, nor had any Ability and Power to provide for, and protect them for the future.

It is not therefore to be wondered at, that *when God heard this, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel,* (as we are told in the 59th Verse of the Psalm I have been quoting) and that, in Consequence of that his just and dreadful Indignation,

376 SERMON XVI.

tion; He smote them with great Plagues, 'till (as it is expressed in the 34th Verse of this 78th Psalm) he had made them seek him, and return, and enquire after God; 'till he had made them remember that God was their Rock, and that the high God was their Redeemer. To this Consideration of the Ingratitude and Forgetfulness of God's Goodness and Power, which the *Israelites* manifested by Repining, and Questioning whether God was able to give them Flesh to eat, and to furnish for them a Table in the Wilderness, by which this their repeated Crime was aggravated, and made offensive in the highest Degree to God, we may add a

Second, Taken from the Occasion itself, of their thus Murmuring, and Complaining.

It

SERMON XVI. 377

It was not (as in the former Instances) for the Supply of the necessary Wants of Life, but for the Gratification of their Lusts, that they now made their Demands. Bread and Water (however improperly required, they had been furnished with ; but now these were not thought sufficient, they must have *Meat for their Lust*, as the Psalmist expresseth it at the 18th Verse of the 78th Psalm.

- This is the inseparable Quality, if not the very Essence of Lust, and Covetousness of every Kind : Not to be contented, much less thankful, for a sufficient Provision of that which is necessary. Superfluity of what administers only to the needless Entertainment of unreasonable Appetite, is what Lust will be always struggling for ; always dissatisfy'd with its Share of ; and restless, uneasy, and complaining in its

378 SERMON XVI.

greedy Pursuit after. And it needs no long Consideration to understand, how highly offensive to God the Disposition I am speaking of will always be, and how hateful to him it will render those, who are under the Influence and Dominion of it.

For, doth not such Lust rob God of the Service which Men ought to pay, while it engrosses them and all their Powers, and Endeavours to itself? Doth not it stop, and intercept all the Return of Praise, Thanksgiving, and Honour which is due to him, for the innumerable, and inestimable Blessings he hath given, while it renders Men insatiable, uneasy, and repining; and makes them (instead of acknowledging what they owe to him) still more and more craving and discontented? Doth it not demonstrate, that they have no Trust, no Dependance upon his

SERMON XVI. 379

his Bounty, but that they expect their Support, and hope for their Happiness in the Possession and Enjoyment of those Things, which their Lusts put them upon heaping together, and making use of?

All this appears from this particular Instance of the *Israelites*: Who no sooner were possessed with this eager Appetite, but they forgot that God was their Saviour, and were so far from continuing to reverence him, that (as the Chapter, which my Text is Part of, hath it, at the 20th Verse) they despised him; and (as we find in the 78th Psalm, at the 19th and 20th Verses) insolently upbraiding him for his former Mercies, questioned whether his Power was able to answer what their Lusts demanded. *He smote the stony Rock indeed, that the Waters gushed out, and the Streams overflowed, but can he furnish a Table in the*

380 SERMON XVI.

Wilderness? Can he give Bread also? Can he provide Flesh for his People?

Further, Besides this Ingratitude to God; this Doubting of his Power and Goodness; this Infidelity, and refusing to trust in, or depend upon his Will for their Support; there was a further Provocation offered to God, by their ill Use of his Gifts, when they had received them.

We have good Ground to conclude, that they consumed in Luxury and Excess that Provision, which their Lusts made them so greedily and eagerly to require. That, for the Space of a whole Month (during which the Meat they had murmured for the Want of, was supplied to them) they had given themselves up to Gluttony, and eat 'till they loathed that Provision which God had given to them at their Desire, as we
may

SERMON XVI 381

may collect from what God said to *Moses*, at the 19th and 20th Verses of the Chapter which my Text is Part of.

Can it then be wondered at, if God was offended at them? If he was so highly provoked, as to destroy those incorrigible Sinners, whom neither his former miraculous Goodness could render thankful, and obedient, and willing to trust in him, and to serve him; nor his present Bounty teach to set a due Value upon his Gifts, and thereby prevent their abusing God's Goodness, and themselves also, while they wasted and misemployed what he had thus bestowed upon them, in dishonouring him, and debauching one another.

My Text tells us, that *the Wrath of the Lord was kindled against the People*, and that *the Lord smote the People with a very great Plague.*

Of

382 SERMON XVI.

Of what Kind that Plague or Stroke was, is not well agreed among Interpreters. Some would understand by it that Fire of the Lord, which is mentioned in the first Verse of this Chapter; which burnt amongst them, and consumed those, that were in the uttermost Parts of the Camp.

Others, and among them a very skilful Expofitor of our own Church, take it to have been the Pestilence, by which God destroyed those that had lusted, that had provoked him both in coveting, and abusing his Gifts.

In this they all agree; That this Destruction was owing to the Anger of God; and, that his Anger was provoked by the Wickedness of those, who perished by the Plague spoken of in the Text, of what Kind soever it were.

This

SERMON XVI. 383

This is the Doctrine which I chuse to deduce from this Example, which (as St. *Paul* teaches us in his First Epistle to the *Corinthians*, the 10th Chapter, at the 11th Verse) was written, was recorded in God's Word for our Admonition: The Instruction which it gives us, is this; That when Men by their Sins provoke God's Wrath, They have just Reason to expect his Judgments: And, that he never wants Instruments to punish, and to destroy those, who refuse to be led by his Goodness to serve him, and to depend upon him.

I shall now apply myself to make such Inferences from what hath been said, as may be of Use to us, and proper for our especial Consideration at this Time, and with respect to the Occasion of our being here Assembled.

We

384 SERMON XVI.

We are called upon by our Sovereign to present ourselves before God with Humiliation and Repentance; and, with Fasting and Prayer to beg of him, that he would continue to preserve us from that terrible Destruction, with which he hath visited, and continues to afflict our neighbouring Nation.

And if we had due Apprehensions, either of the Nature of that Judgment which we fear the Approaches of, or of the Reasons we have to reckon ourselves deserving of, and ripe for, the Consuming Fire of God's Wrath; Our Humiliation would be unfeigned, and intense; Our Prayers earnest; and our Repentance, by God's Grace, immediate and effectual.

All the Effects of God's Displeasure are to be feared: But, in this World, no one carries more Destruction, or more Horrour with it, than this,

SERMON XVI. 385

this, which even God himself in his holy Word seems to distinguish from the rest by way of Eminence, in the xivth Chapter of *Ezekiel*, at the 19th Verse, where he calls his sending the Pestilence into a Land, *The pouring out his Fury upon it in Blood, to cut off from it Man and Beast.*

Let every one imagine to himself the deplorable Condition he must be in, should it please God to send upon him this terrible Visitation. Let him think how painful, and how loathsome it will render his Body; how it will disorder, and distract his Mind; how it will drive far from him all Assistance, and Relief; how, when he most of all stands in Need of Help, he shall find none that will venture to administer it to him; shall find no Ties of Humanity, or Kindred strong enough to hinder all Mankind from abandon-

386 SERMON XVI.

ing, and flying from him ; and himself seized upon by noisome Corruption, even before Death puts an End to his Misery and Pains.

Let us consider, as the Case of particular Men, so that of whole Communities (if they can truly be called such after once this Judgment of God hath overtaken them.)

Let us think how deplorable the Appearance of it is, while it lays waste populous and flourishing Cities : Fills their Streets with Groans of the Dying, and Bodies of the Dead : Consumes them with Famine, while it deters all from supplying their Wants ; And, while Death and Destruction are thus busy within, the Sword is drawn without, and ready to cut off without Mercy all those, who attempt to fly from the Misery, and Dangers which they are surrounded with.

SERMON XVI. 387

I am not going about to represent to you the manifold dreadful Judgments, which are included in this one, which we tremble at the Apprehensions of, and are humbling ourselves before God, with Prayer to him that he would be pleased to preserve us still from it: No Words can describe it as it is, or represent in one View all the direful Circumstances of it.

What hath been said will answer the Purpose for which it hath been spoken, if it only make you consider, that God who can inflict such Judgments, is very greatly to be feared: And that it will very nearly concern us to examine, whether we have not more than Reason enough to apprehend, that we have so far provoked his Wrath, as that he will smite us also with this very great Destruction.

388 SERMON XVI.

I have already observed, that the Aggravations of that Sin of the Children of *Israel*, by which God was offended so much, as that he struck them with a very great Plague, were chiefly these: Their Ingratitude to God in forgetting his former Mercies. Their greedy and insatiable Lusts, which put them upon Murmuring, and shewing themselves discontented with what God's Bounty and Goodness had provided for their Support. And their Infidelity, their Doubting of God's Power to supply their imaginary Wants, their Irreverence towards him, and their Want of just Apprehensions of his Greatness, and of the Awful Regard which they ought to have had for him.

It will be too difficult a Task for us, to find out in which of these Particulars we are not equally culpable with them, or rather in which

we

SERMON XVI. 389

we do not very far exceed the Measure of their Wickedness.

The Mercies of God to our Church and Nations have been wonderful in themselves, and oftentimes repeated. Our Faith hath been delivered from Error: Our Worship of God hath been reformed from Superstition, and Idolatry: Our Land hath been blessed with Victory in War, and with Plenty in Peace: Our Constitution, to which we owe the Possession, and Enjoyment of our Religious and Civil Liberties, if at any time disordered and broken, hath been restored; if endangered, hath been rescued, and preserved to us. But, among all these Mercies of God towards us, is it to be remembered, That we were ever thankful to him as we ought to be? That we were ever satisfied and contented? Ever free from Murmuring, and complaining even of our Deliverances

390 SERMON XVI.

ces themselves, and of the Means, and Instruments by which God conveyed them to us.

Again. Have we not Lusted as they also Lusted, or, to confess the Truth, much more unreasonably, wantonly and provokingly, than they? Can any Age parallel the unbounded Covetousness, Ambition, and Luxury of our own? Or produce an Example of a People so infatuated with these Lusts, as that, when they already abounded with every thing that could be serviceable to their Appetite, and Enjoyments, they should plunge themselves in Ruin, by still grasping at more than they could possibly have any Need, or make any Use of?

Nor yet shall we find ourselves less justly chargeable with that third aggravating Provocation, by which the *Jews* kindled the Wrath of God against themselves, to their own Destruction;

SERMON XVI. 391

struction ; I mean Infidelity ; Want of due Apprehensions of God's Greatness ; of our Duty towards him ; and our Dependance upon him.

To this we may ascribe that Deluge of Profaneness, Irreligion, and Blasphemy with which our Land is covered. Hence it is that we hear the sacred Name of God irreverently used in Imprecations, Curses, and unnecessary Oaths ; and too little Regard shewn to it, in Oaths that are more deliberate, and serious. Hence it is that we see the Being of God disputed ; the Authority of his Word denied ; his Worship neglected, and despised ; his Mysteries ridiculed ; and that wonderful Method which he hath used to save Sinners, by sending his Son Jesus Christ into the World to take our Nature upon him, and to make Satisfaction in it for us, is debated about, and disallowed, as improper, and unreasonable. As

392 SERMON XVI.

As this is too much the Case of our Nation, we have too much Reason to be afraid that the Wrath of God is kindled against us. Let us therefore humble ourselves before him; Let us confess our Sins, and beg of him to pardon them; Let us firmly resolve to amend our Lives, and to serve our God with our whole Heart and Mind; Let us with Gratitude call to Mind his manifold Mercies, and do the best we can to become worthy of them, and to make suitable Returns of Praise, and Obedience to him for them; for these are the only effectual Means we can use to put a Stop to his Wrath, and to those dreadful Judgments which our Sins deserve, and which his Majesty, and Justice denounce against us.

May God accept these our Endeavours, and continue to us his Merciful Protection, for the Sake of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord,

F I N I S.